UARDA

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UARDA

A ROMANCE OF ANCIENT EGYPT

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

By CLARA BELL

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

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Authorized Edition.

DEDICATION.

Thou knowest well from what this book arose.
When suffering seized and held me in its clasp
Thy fostering hand released me from its grasp,
And from amid the thorns there bloomed a rose.
Air, dew, and sunshine were bestowed by Thee,
And Thine it is; without these lines from me.

PREFACE.

In the winter of 1873 I spent some weeks in one of the tombs of the Necropolis of Thebes in order to study the monuments of that solemn city of the dead; and during my long rides in the silent desert the germ was developed whence this book has since grown. The leisure of mind and body required to write it was given me through a long but not disabling illness.

In the first instance I intended to elucidate this story—like my "Egyptian Princess"—with numerous and extensive notes placed at the end; but I was led to give up this plan from finding that it would lead me to the repetition of much that I had written in the notes to that earlier work.

The numerous notes to the former novel had a threefold purpose. In the first place they served to explain the text; in the second they were a guarantee of the care with which I had striven to depict the archæological details in all their individuality from the records of the monuments and of Classic Authors; and thirdly I hoped to supply the reader who desired further knowledge of the period with some guide to his studies.

In the present work I shall venture to content myself with the simple statement that I have introduced nothing as proper to Egypt and to the period of Rameses that cannot be proved by some authority; the numerous monuments which have descended to us from the time of the Rameses, in fact enable the enquirer to understand much of the aspect and arrangement of Egyptian life, and to follow it step by step through the details of religious, public, and private life, even of

particular individuals. The same remark cannot be made in regard to their mental life, and here many an anachronism will slip in, many things will appear modern, and show the coloring of the Christian mode of thought.

Every part of this book is intelligible without the aid of notes; but, for the reader who seeks for further enlightenment, I have added some foot-notes, and have not neglected to mention such works as afford more detailed information on the subjects mentioned in the narrative.

The reader who wishes to follow the mind of the author in this work should not trouble himself with the notes as he reads, but merely at the beginning of each chapter read over the notes which belong to the foregoing one. Every glance at the foot-notes must necessarily disturb and injure the development of the tale as a work of art. The story stands here as it flowed from one fount, and was supplied with notes only after its completion.

A narrative of Herodotus combined with the Epos of Pentaur, of which so many copies have been handed down to us, forms the foundation of the story.

The treason of the Regent related by the Father of history is referable perhaps to the reign of the third and not of the second Rameses. But it is by no means certain that the Halicarnassian writer was in this case misinformed; and in this fiction no history will be inculcated, only as a background shall I offer a sketch of the time of Sesostris, from a picturesque point of view, but with the nearest possible approach to truth. It is true that to this end nothing has been neglected that could be learnt from the monuments or the pa-

pyri; still the book is only a romance, a poetic fiction, in which I wish all the facts derived from history and all the costume drawn from the monuments to be regarded as incidental, and the emotions of the actors in the story as what I attach importance to.

But I must be allowed to make one observation.

From studying the conventional mode of execution of ancient Egyptian art—which was strictly subject to the hieratic laws of type and proportion—we have accustomed ourselves to imagine the inhabitants of the Nile-valley in the time of the Pharaohs as tall and haggard men with little distinction of individual physiognomy, and recently a great painter has sought to represent them under this aspect in a modern picture.

This is an error; the Egyptians, in spite of their aversion to foreigners and their strong attachment to their native soil, were one of the most intellectual and active people of antiquity; and he who would represent them as they lived, and to that end copies the forms which remain painted on the walls of the temples and sepulchres, is the accomplice of those priestly corrupters of art who compelled the painters and sculptors of the Pharaonic era to abandon truth to nature in favor of their sacred laws of proportion.

He who desires to paint the ancient Egyptians with truth and fidelity, must regard it in some sort as an act of enfranchisement; that is to say, he must release the conventional forms from those fetters which were peculiar to their art and altogether foreign to their real life. Indeed, works of sculpture remain to us of the time of the first pyramid, which represent men with the truth of nature, unfettered by the sacred canon. We can recall the so-called "Village Judge" of Bulaq, the "Scribe"

now in Paris, and a few figures in bronze in different museums, as well as the noble and characteristic busts of all epochs, which amply prove how great the variety of individual physiognomy, and, with that, of individual character was among the Egyptians. Alma Tadema in London and Gustav Richter in Berlin have, as painters, treated Egyptian subjects in a manner which the poet recognizes and accepts with delight.

Many earlier witnesses than the late writer Flavius Vopiscus might be referred to who show us the Egyptians as an industrious and peaceful people, passionately devoted it is true to all that pertains to the other world, but also enjoying the gifts of life to the fullest extent, nay sometimes to excess.

Real men, such as we see around us in actual life, not silhouettes constructed to the old priestly scale such as the monuments show us—real living men dwelt by the old Nile-stream; and the poet who would represent them must courageously seize on types out of the daily life of modern men that surround him, without fear of deviating too far from reality, and, placing them in their own long past time, color them only and clothe them to correspond with it.

I have discussed the authorities for the conception of love which I have ascribed to the ancients in the preface to the second edition of "An Egyptian Princess."

With these lines I send Uarda into the world; and in them I add my thanks to those dear friends in whose beautiful home, embowered in green, bird-haunted woods, I have so often refreshed my spirit and recovered my strength, where I now write the last words of this book.

Rheinböllerhütte, September 22, 1876.

GEORG EBERS.

PREFACE

TO THE FIFTH GERMAN EDITION.

THE earlier editions of "Uarda" were published in such rapid succession, that no extensive changes in the stereotyped text could be made; but from the first issue, I have not ceased to correct it, and can now present to the public this new fifth edition as a "revised" one.

Having felt a constantly increasing affection for "Uarda" during the time I was writing, the friendly and comprehensive attention bestowed upon it by our greatest critics and the favorable reception it met with in the various classes of society, afforded me the utmost pleasure.

I owe the most sincere gratitude to the honored gentlemen, who called my attention to certain errors, and among them will name particularly Professor Paul Ascherson of Berlin, and Dr. C. Rohrbach of Gotha. Both will find their remarks regarding mistakes in the geographical location of plants, heeded in this new edition.

The notes, after mature deliberation, have been placed at the foot of the pages instead of at the end of the book.

So many criticisms concerning the title "Uarda" have recently reached my ears, that, rather by way of explanation than apology, I will here repeat what I said in the preface to the third edition.

This title has its own history, and the more difficult it would be for me to defend it, the more ready I am to allow an advocate to speak for me, an advocate who

bears a name no less distinguished than that of G. E. Lessing, who says:

"Nanine? (by Voltaire, 1749). What sort of title is that? What thoughts does it awake? Neither more nor less than a title should arouse. A title must not be a bill of fare. The less it betrays of the contents, the better it is. Author and spectator are both satisfied, and the ancients rarely gave their comedies anything but insignificant names."

This may be the case with "Uarda," whose character is less prominent than some others, it is true, but whose sorrows direct the destinies of my other heroes and heroines.

Why should I conceal the fact? The character of "Uarda" and the present story have grown out of the memory of a Fellah girl, half child, half maiden, whom I saw suffer and die in a hut at Abd el Qurnah in the Necropolis of Thebes.

I still persist in the conviction I have so frequently expressed, the conviction that the fundamental traits of the life of the soul have undergone very trivial modifications among civilized nations in all times and ages, but will endeavor to explain the contrary opinion, held by my opponents, by calling attention to the circumstance, that the expression of these emotions show considerable variations among different peoples, and at different epochs. I believe that Juvenal, one of the ancient writers who best understood human nature, was right in saying:

"Nil erit ulterius, quod nostris moribus addat
Posteritas: eadem cupient facientque minores."

Leipsic, October 15th, 1877.

GEORG EBERS.

U A R D A.

CHAPTER I.

By the walls of Thebes—the old city of a hundred gates—the Nile spreads to a broad river; the heights, which follow the stream on both sides, here take a more decided outline; solitary, almost cone-shaped peaks stand out sharply from the level background of the many-colored limestone hills, on which no palm-tree flourishes and in which no humble desert-plant can strike root. Rocky crevasses and gorges cut more or less deeply into the mountain range, and up to its ridge extends the desert, destructive of all life, with sand and stones, with rocky cliffs and reef-like, desert hills.

Behind the eastern range the desert spreads to the Red Sea; behind the western it stretches without limit, into infinity. In the belief of the Egyptians beyond it lay the region of the dead.

Between these two ranges of hills, which serve as walls or ramparts to keep back the desert-sand, flows the fresh and bounteous Nile, bestowing blessing and abundance; at once the father and the cradle of millions of beings. On each shore spreads the wide plain of black and fruitful soil, and in the depths many-shaped creatures, in coats of mail or scales, swarm and find subsistence.

The lotos floats on the mirror of the waters, and among the papyrus reeds by the shore water-fowl innumerable build their nests. Between the river and the mountain-range lie fields, which after the seed-time are of a shining blue-green, and towards the time of harvest glow like gold. Near the brooks and water-wheels here and there stands a shady sycamore; and date-palms, carefully tended, group themselves in groves. The fruitful plain, watered and manured every year by the inundation, lies at the foot of the sandy desert-hills behind it, and stands out like a garden flower-bed from the gravel-path.

In the fourteenth century before Christ—for to so remote a date we must direct the thoughts of the reader—impassable limits had been set by the hand of man, in many places in Thebes, to the inroads of the water; high dykes of stone and embankments protected the streets and squares, the temples and the palaces, from the overflow.

Canals that could be tightly closed up led from the dykes to the land within, and smaller branch-cuttings to the gardens of Thebes.

On the right, the eastern bank of the Nile, rose the buildings of the far-famed residence of the Pharaohs. Close by the river stood the immense and gaudy Temples of the city of Amon; behind these and at a short distance from the Eastern hills—indeed at their very foot and partly even on the soil of the desert—were the palaces of the King and nobles, and the shady streets in which the high narrow houses of the citizens stood in close rows.

Life was gay and busy in the streets of the capital of the Pharaohs.

The western shore of the Nile showed a quite different scene. Here too there was no lack of stately buildings or thronging men; but while on the farther side of the river there was a compact mass of houses, and the citizens went cheerfully and openly about their day's work, on this side there were solitary splendid structures, round which little houses and huts seemed to cling as children cling to the protection of a mother. And these buildings lay in detached groups.

Any one climbing the hill and looking down would form the notion that there lay below him a number of neighboring villages, each with its lordly manor house. Looking from the plain up to the precipice of the western hills, hundreds of closed portals could be seen, some solitary, others closely ranged in rows; a great number of them towards the foot of the slope, yet more half-way up, and a few at a considerable height.

And even more dissimilar were the slow-moving, solemn groups in the roadways on this side, and the cheerful, confused throng yonder. There, on the eastern shore, all were in eager pursuit of labor or recreation, stirred by pleasure or by grief, active in deed and speech; here, in the west, little was spoken, a spell seemed to check the footstep of the wanderer, a pale hand to sadden the bright glance of every eye, and to banish the smile from every lip.

And yet many a gaily-dressed bark stopped at the shore, there was no lack of minstrel bands, grand processions passed on to the western heights; but the Nile boats bore the dead, the songs sung here were songs of lamentation, and the processions consisted of mourners following the sarcophagus.

We are standing on the soil of the City of the Dead of Thebes.

Nevertheless even here nothing is wanting for return and revival, for to the Egyptian his dead died not. He closed his eyes, he bore him to the Necropolis, to the house of the embalmer, or Kolchytes, and then to the grave; but he knew that the souls of the departed lived on; that the justified absorbed into Osiris floated over the Heavens in the vessel of the Sun; that they appeared on earth in the form they choose to take upon them, and that they might exert influence on the current of the lives of the survivors. So he took care to give a worthy interment to his dead, above all to have the body embalmed so as to endure long: and had fixed times to bring fresh offerings for the dead of flesh and fowl, with drink-offerings and sweet-smelling essences, and vegetables and flowers.

Neither at the obsequies nor at the offerings might the ministers of the gods be absent, and the silent City of the Dead was regarded as a favored sanctuary in which to establish schools and dwellings for the learned.

So it came to pass that in the temples and on the site of the Necropolis, large communities of priests dwelt together, and close to the extensive embalming houses lived numerous Kolchytes, who handed down the secrets of their art from father to son.

Besides these there were other manufactories and shops. In the former, sarcophagi of stone and of wood, linen bands for enveloping mummies, and amulets for decorating them, were made; in the latter, merchants kept spices and essences, flowers, fruits, vegetables and pastry for sale. Calves, gazelles, goats, geese and

other fowl, were fed on enclosed meadow-plats, and the mourners betook themselves thither to select what they needed from among the beasts pronounced by the priests to be clean for sacrifice, and to have them sealed with the sacred seal. Many bought only part of a victim at the shambles—the poor could not even do this. They bought only colored cakes in the shape of beasts, which symbolically took the place of the calves and geese which their means were unable to procure. In the handsomest shops sat servants of the priests, who received forms written on rolls of papyrus which were filled up in the writing room of the temple with those sacred verses which the departed spirit must know and repeat to ward off the evil genius of the deep, to open the gate of the under world, and to be held righteous before Osiris and the forty-two assessors of the subterranean court of justice.

What took place within the temples was concealed from view, for each was surrounded by a high enclosing wall with lofty, carefully-closed portals, which were only opened when a chorus of priests came out to sing a pious hymn, in the morning to Horus the rising god, and in the evening to Tum the descending god.*

As soon as the evening hymn of the priests was heard, the Necropolis was deserted, for the mourners and those who were visiting the graves were required by this time to return to their boats and to quit the City of the Dead. Crowds of men who had marched in the processions of the west bank hastened in disorder

* The course of the Sun was compared to that of the life of Man. He rose as the child Horus, grew by midday to the hero Ra, who conquered the Uræus snake for his diadem, and by evening was an old Man, Tum. Light had been born of darkness, hence Tum was regarded as older than Horus and the other gods of light.

to the shore, driven on by the body of watchmen who took it in turns to do this duty and to protect the graves against robbers. The merchants closed their booths, the embalmers and workmen ended their day's work and retired to their houses, the priests returned to the temples, and the inns were filled with guests, who had come hither on long pilgrimages from a distance, and who preferred passing the night in the vicinity of the dead whom they had come to visit, to going across to the bustling noisy city on the farther shore.

The voices of the singers and of the wailing women were hushed, even the song of the sailors on the numberless ferry boats from the western shore to Thebes died away, its faint echo was now and then borne across on the evening air, and at last all was still.

A cloudless sky spread over the silent City of the Dead, now and then darkened for an instant by the swiftly passing shade of a bat returning to its home in a cave or cleft of the rock after flying the whole evening near the Nile to catch flies, to drink, and so prepare itself for the next day's sleep. From time to time black forms with long shadows glided over the still illuminated plain—the Jackals, who at this hour frequented the shore to slake their thirst, and often fearlessly showed themselves in troops in the vicinity of the pens of geese and goats.

It was forbidden to hunt these robbers, as they were accounted sacred to the god Anubis,* the tutelary

* The jackal-headed god Anubis was the son of Osiris and Nephthys, and the jackal was sacred to him. In the earliest ages even he is prominent in the nether world. He conducts the mummifying process, preserves the corpse, guards the Necropolis, and, as Hermes Psychopompos (Hermanubis), opens the way for the souls. According to Plutarch "He is the watch of the gods as the dog is the watch of men."

of sepulchres; and indeed they did little mischief, for they found abundant food in the tombs.

The remnants of the meat offerings from the altars were consumed by them; to the perfect satisfaction of the devotees, who, when they found that by the following day the meat had disappeared, believed that it had been accepted and taken away by the spirits of the underworld.

They also did the duty of trusty watchers, for they were a dangerous foe for any intruder who, under the shadow of the night, might attempt to violate a grave.

Thus—on that summer evening of the year 1352 B. C., when we invite the reader to accompany us to the Necropolis of Thebes—after the priests' hymn had died away, all was still in the City of the Dead.

The soldiers on guard were already returning from their first round when suddenly, on the north side of the Necropolis, a dog barked loudly; soon a second took up the cry, a third, a fourth. The captain of the watch called to his men to halt, and, as the cry of the dogs spread and grew louder every minute, commanded them to march towards the north.

The little troop had reached the high dyke which divided the west bank of the Nile from a branch canal, and looked from thence over the plain as far as the river and to the north of the Necropolis. Once more the word to "halt" was given, and as the guard perceived the glare of torches in the direction where the dogs were barking loudest, they hurried forward and came up with the author of the disturbance near the Pylon* of the temple erected by Seti I., the deceased father of the reigning King Rameses II.

* The two pyramidal towers joined by a gateway which formed the entrance to an Egyptian temple were called the Pylon.

The moon was up, and her pale light flooded the stately structure, while the walls glowed with the ruddy smoky light of the torches which flared in the hands of black attendants.

A man of sturdy build, in sumptuous dress, was knocking at the brass-covered temple door with the metal handle of a whip, so violently that the blows rang far and loud through the night. Near him stood a litter, and a chariot, to which were harnessed two fine horses. In the litter sat a young woman, and in the carriage, next to the driver, was the tall figure of a lady. Several men of the upper classes and many servants stood around the litter and the chariot. Few words were exchanged; the whole attention of the strangely lighted groups seemed concentrated on the temple-gate. The darkness concealed the features of individuals, but the mingled light of the moon and the torches was enough to reveal to the gate-keeper, who looked down on the party from a tower of the Pylon, that it was composed of persons of the highest rank; nay, perhaps of the royal family.

He called aloud to the one who knocked, and asked him what was his will.

He looked up, and in a voice so rough and imperious, that the lady in the litter shrank in horror as its tones suddenly violated the place of the dead, he cried out—"How long are we to wait here for you—you dirty hound? Come down and open the door and then ask questions. If the torch-light is not bright enough to show you who is waiting, I will score our name on your shoulders with my whip, and teach you how to receive princely visitors."

While the porter muttered an unintelligible answer

and came down the steps within to open the door, the lady in the chariot turned to her impatient companion and said in a pleasant but yet decided voice, "You forget, Paaker, that you are back again in Egypt, and that here you have to deal not with the wild Schasu,* but with friendly priests of whom we have to solicit a favor. We have always had to lament your roughness, which seems to me very ill-suited to the unusual circumstances under which we approach this sanctuary."

Although these words were spoken in a tone rather of regret than of blame, they wounded the sensibilities of the person addressed; his wide nostrils began to twitch ominously, he clenched his right hand over the handle of his whip, and, while he seemed to be bowing humbly, he struck such a heavy blow on the bare leg of a slave who was standing near to him, an old Ethiopian, that he shuddered as if from sudden cold, though—knowing his lord only too well—he let no cry of pain escape him. Meanwhile the gate-keeper had opened the door, and with him a tall young priest stepped out into the open air to ask the will of the intruders.

Paaker would have seized the opportunity of speaking, but the lady in the chariot interposed and said:

"I am Bent-Anat, the daughter of the King, and this lady in the litter is Nefert, the wife of the noble Mena, the charioteer of my father. We were going in company with these gentlemen to the north-west valley of the Necropolis to see the new works there. You know the narrow pass in the rocks which leads up the gorge. On the way home I myself held the reins and

* A Semitic race of robbers in the east of Egypt.

I had the misfortune to drive over a girl who sat by the road with a basket full of flowers, and to hurt her —to hurt her very badly I am afraid. The wife of Mena with her own hands bound up the child, and then we carried her to her father's house—he is a paraschites*—Pinem is his name. I know not whether he is known to you."

"Thou hast been into his house, Princess?"

"Indeed, I was obliged, holy father," she replied, "I know of course that I have defiled myself by crossing the threshold of these people, but—"

"But," cried the wife of Mena, raising herself in her litter, "Bent-Anat can in a day be purified by thee or by her house-priest, while she can hardly—or perhaps never—restore the child whole and sound again to the unhappy father."

"Still, the den of a paraschites is above every thing unclean," said the chamberlain Penbesa, master of the ceremonies to the princess, interrupting the wife of Mena, "and I did not conceal my opinion when Bent-Anat announced her intention of visiting the accursed hole in person. I suggested," he continued, turning to the priest, "that she should let the girl be taken home, and send a royal present to the father."

"And the princess?" asked the priest.

"She acted, as she always does, on her own judgment," replied the master of the ceremonies.

"And that always hits on the right course," cried the wife of Mena.

"Would to God it were so!" said the princess in a subdued voice. Then she continued, addressing the

* One who opened the bodies of the dead to prepare them for being embalmed.

priest, "Thou knowest the will of the Gods and the hearts of men, holy father, and I myself know that I give alms willingly and help the poor even when there is none to plead for them but their poverty. But after what has occurred here, and to these unhappy people, it is I who come as a suppliant."

"Thou?" said the chamberlain.

"I," answered the princess with decision. The priest who up to this moment had remained a silent witness of the scene raised his right hand as in blessing and spoke.

"Thou hast done well. The Hathors fashioned thy heart* and the Lady of Truth guides it. Thou hast broken in on our night-prayers to request us to send a doctor to the injured girl?"

"Thou hast said."

"I will ask the high-priest to send the best leech for outward wounds immediately to the child. But where is the house of the paraschites Pinem? I do not know it."

"Northwards from the terrace of Hatasu,** close to —; but I will charge one of my attendants to conduct the leech. Besides, I want to know early in the morning how the child is doing.—Paaker."

The rough visitor, whom we already know, thus called upon, bowed to the earth, his arms hanging by his sides, and asked:

* Hathor was Isis under a substantial form. She is the goddess of the pure, light heaven, and bears the Sun-disk between cow-horns on a cow's head or on a human head with cow's ears. She was named the Fair, and all the pure joys of life are in her gift. Later she was regarded as a Muse who beautifies life with enjoyment, love, song, and the dance. She appears as a good fairy by the cradle of children and decides their lot in life. She bears many names; and several, generally seven, Hathors were represented, who personified the attributes and influence of the goddess.

** A great queen of the 18th dynasty and guardian of two Pharaohs.

"What dost thou command?"

"I appoint you guide to the physician," said the princess. "It will be easy to the king's pioneer* to find the little half-hidden house again—besides, you share my guilt, for," she added, turning to the priest, "I confess that the misfortune happened because I would try with my horses to overtake Paaker's Syrian racers, which he declared to be swifter than the Egyptian horses. It was a mad race."

"And Amon be praised that it ended as it did," exclaimed the master of the ceremonies. "Paaker's chariot lies dashed in pieces in the valley, and his best horse is badly hurt."

"He will see to him when he has taken the physician to the house of the paraschites," said the princess. "Dost thou know, Penbesa—thou anxious guardian of a thoughtless girl—that to-day for the first time I am glad that my father is at the war in distant Satiland?"**

"He would not have welcomed us kindly!" said the master of the ceremonies, laughing.

"But the leech, the leech!" cried Bent-Anat. "Paaker, it is settled then. You will conduct him, and bring us to-morrow morning news of the wounded girl."

Paaker bowed; the princess bowed her head; the priest and his companions, who meanwhile had come out of the temple and joined him, raised their hands in blessing, and the belated procession moved towards the Nile.

* The title here rendered pioneer was that of an officer whose duties were those at once of a scout and of a Quarter-Master General. In unknown and comparatively savage countries it was an onerous post. *Translator.*

** Asia.

Paaker remained alone with his two slaves; the commission with which the princess had charged him greatly displeased him. So long as the moonlight enabled him to distinguish the litter of Mena's wife, he gazed after it; then he endeavored to recollect the position of the hut of the paraschites. The captain of the watch still stood with the guard at the gate of the temple.

"Do you know the dwelling of Pinem the paraschites?" asked Paaker.

"What do you want with him?"

"That is no concern of yours," retorted Paaker.

"Lout!" exclaimed the captain, "left face and forwards, my men."

"Halt!" cried Paaker in a rage. "I am the king's chief pioneer."

"Then you will all the more easily find the way back by which you came. March."

The words were followed by a peal of many-voiced laughter: the re-echoing insult so confounded Paaker that he dropped his whip on the ground. The slave, whom a short time since he had struck with it, humbly picked it up and then followed his lord into the forecourt of the temple. Both attributed the titter, which they still could hear without being able to detect its origin, to wandering spirits. But the mocking tones had been heard too by the old gate-keeper, and the laughers were better known to him than to the king's pioneer; he strode with heavy steps to the door of the temple through the black shadow of the pylon, and striking blindly before him called out—

"Ah! you good-for-nothing brood of Seth.* You gallows-birds and brood of hell—I am coming."

The giggling ceased; a few youthful figures appeared in the moonlight, the old man pursued them panting, and, after a short chase, a troop of youths fled back through the temple gate.

The door-keeper had succeeded in catching one miscreant, a boy of thirteen, and held him so tight by the ear that his pretty head seemed to have grown in a horizontal direction from his shoulders.

"I will take you before the school-master, you plague-of-locusts, you swarm of bats!" cried the old man out of breath. But the dozen of school-boys, who had availed themselves of the opportunity to break out of bounds, gathered coaxing round him, with words of repentance, though every eye sparkled with delight at the fun they had had, and of which no one could deprive them; and when the biggest of them took the old man's chin, and promised to give him the wine which his mother was to send him next day for the week's use, the porter let go his prisoner—who tried to rub the pain out of his burning ear—and cried out in harsher tones than before:

"You will pay me, will you, to let you off! Do you think I will let your tricks pass? You little know this old man. I will complain to the Gods, not to the school-master; and as for your wine, youngster, I will offer it as a libation, that heaven may forgive you."

* The Typhon of the Greeks. The enemy of Osiris, of truth, good and purity. Discord and strife in nature. Horus who fights against him for his father Osiris, can throw him and stun him, but never annihilate him.

CHAPTER II.

THE temple where, in the fore-court, Paaker was waiting, and where the priest had disappeared to call the leech, was called the "House of Seti"* and was one of the largest in the City of the Dead. Only that magnificent building of the time of the deposed royal race of the reigning king's grandfather—that temple which had been founded by Thotmes III., and whose gate-way Amenophis III. had adorned with immense colossal statues**—exceeded it in the extent of its plan; in every other respect it held the pre-eminence among the sanctuaries of the Necropolis. Rameses I. had founded it shortly after he succeeded in seizing the Egyptian throne; and his yet greater son Seti carried on the erection, in which the service of the dead for the Manes of the members of the new royal family was conducted, and the high festivals held in honor of the Gods of the under-world. Great sums had been expended for its establishment, for the maintenance of the priesthood of its sanctuary, and the support of the institutions connected with it. These were intended to be equal to the great original foundations of priestly learning at Heliopolis and Memphis; they were regulated on the same pattern, and with the object of raising the new royal residence of Upper Egypt, namely Thebes, above the capitals of Lower Egypt in regard to philosophical distinction.

One of the most important of these foundations

* It is still standing, and known as the temple of Qurnah.

** The well-known colossal statues, of which that which stands to the north is the famous musical statue, or Pillar of Memnon.

was a very celebrated school of learning.* First there was the high-school, in which priests, physicians, judges, mathematicians, astronomers, grammarians, and other learned men, not only had the benefit of instruction, but, subsequently, when they had won admission to the highest ranks of learning, and attained the dignity of "Scribes," were maintained at the cost of the king, and enabled to pursue their philosophical speculations and researches, in freedom from all care, and in the society of fellow-workers of equal birth and identical interests.

An extensive library, in which thousands of papyrus-rolls were preserved, and to which a manufactory of papyrus was attached, was at the disposal of the learned; and some of them were intrusted with the education of the younger disciples, who had been prepared in the elementary school, which was also dependent on the House —or university—of Seti. The lower school was open to every son of a free citizen, and was often frequented by several hundred boys, who also found night-quarters there. The parents were of course required either to pay for their maintenance, or to send due supplies of provisions for the keep of their children at school.

In a separate building lived the temple-boarders, a few sons of the noblest families, who were brought up by the priests at a great expense to their parents.

Seti I., the founder of this establishment, had had his own sons, not excepting Rameses, his successor, educated here.

The elementary schools were strictly ruled, and the rod played so large a part in them, that a pedagogue could record this saying: "The scholar's ears are at his back: when he is flogged then he hears."

* Every detail of this description of an Egyptian school is derived from sources dating from the reign of Rameses II. and his successor, Merneptah.

Those youths who wished to pass up from the lower to the high-school had to undergo an examination. The student, when he had passed it, could choose a master from among the learned of the higher grades, who undertook to be his philosophical guide, and to whom he remained attached all his life through, as a client to his patron. He could obtain the degree of "Scribe" and qualify for public office by a second examination.

Near to these schools of learning there stood also a school of art, in which instruction was given to students who desired to devote themselves to architecture, sculpture, or painting; in these also the learner might choose his master.

Every teacher in these institutions belonged to the priesthood of the House of Seti. It consisted of more than eight hundred members, divided into five classes, and conducted by three so-called Prophets.

The first prophet was the high-priest of the House of Seti, and at the same time the superior of all the thousands of upper and under servants of the divinities which belonged to the City of the Dead of Thebes.

The temple of Seti proper was a massive structure of limestone. A row of Sphinxes led from the Nile to the surrounding wall, and to the first vast pro-pylon, which formed the entrance to a broad fore-court, enclosed on the two sides by colonnades, and beyond which stood a second gate-way. When he had passed through this door, which stood between two towers, in shape like truncated pyramids, the stranger came to a second court resembling the first, closed at the farther end by a noble row of pillars, which formed part of the central temple itself.

The innermost and last was dimly lighted by a few lamps.

Behind the temple of Seti stood large square structures of brick of the Nile mud, which however had a handsome and decorative effect, as the humble material of which they were constructed was plastered with lime, and that again was painted with colored pictures and hieroglyphic inscriptions.

The internal arrangement of all these houses was the same. In the midst was an open court, on to which opened the doors of the rooms of the priests and philosophers. On each side of the court was a shady, covered colonnade of wood, and in the midst a tank with ornamental plants. In the upper story were the apartments for the scholars, and instruction was usually given in the paved courtyard strewn with mats.

The most imposing was the house of the chief prophets; it was distinguished by its waving standards and stood about a hundred paces behind the temple of Seti, between a well kept grove and a clear lake—the sacred tank of the temple; but they only occupied it while fulfilling their office, while the splendid houses which they lived in with their wives and children, lay on the other side of the river, in Thebes proper.

The untimely visit to the temple could not remain unobserved by the colony of sages. Just as ants when a hand breaks in on their dwelling, hurry restlessly hither and thither, so an unwonted stir had agitated, not the school-boys only, but the teachers and the priests. They collected in groups near the outer walls, asking questions and hazarding guesses. A messenger from the king had arrived—the princess Bent-Anat had been attacked by the Kolchytes—and

a wag among the school-boys who had got out, declared that Paaker, the king's pioneer, had been brought into the temple by force to be made to learn to write better. As the subject of the joke had formerly been a pupil of the House of Seti, and many delectable stories of his errors in penmanship still survived in the memory of the later generation of scholars, this information was received with joyful applause; and it seemed to have a glimmer of probability, in spite of the apparent contradiction that Paaker filled one of the highest offices near the king, when a grave young priest declared that he had seen the pioneer in the forecourt of the temple.

The lively discussion, the laughter and shouting of the boys at such an unwonted hour, was not unobserved by the chief priest.

This remarkable prelate, Ameni the son of Nebket, a scion of an old and noble family, was far more than merely the independent head of the temple-brotherhood, among whom he was prominent for his power and wisdom; for all the priesthood in the length and breadth of the land acknowledged his supremacy, asked his advice in difficult cases, and never resisted the decisions in spiritual matters which emanated from the House of Seti—that is to say, from Ameni. He was the embodiment of the priestly idea; and if at times he made heavy—nay extraordinary—demands on individual fraternities, they were submitted to, for it was known by experience that the indirect roads which he ordered them to follow all converged on one goal, namely the exaltation of the power and dignity of the hierarchy. The king appreciated this remarkable man, and had long endeavored to attach him to the court,

as keeper of the royal seal; but Ameni was not to be induced to give up his apparently modest position; for he contemned all outward show and ostentatious titles; he ventured sometimes to oppose a decided resistance to the measures of the Pharaoh,* and was not minded to give up his unlimited control of the priests for the sake of a limited dominion over what seemed to him petty external concerns, in the service of a king who was only too independent and hard to influence.

He regularly arranged his mode and habits of life in an exceptional way.

Eight days out of ten he remained in the temple entrusted to his charge; two he devoted to his family, who lived on the other bank of the Nile; but he let no one, not even those nearest to him, know what portion of the ten days he gave up to recreation. He required only four hours of sleep. This he usually took in a dark room which no sound could reach, and in the middle of the day; never at night, when the coolness and quiet seemed to add to his powers of work, and when from time to time he could give himself up to the study of the starry heavens.

All the ceremonials that his position required of him, the cleansing, purification, shaving, and fasting he fulfilled with painful exactitude, and the outer bespoke the inner man.

Ameni was entering on his fiftieth year; his figure was tall, and had escaped altogether the stoutness to which at that age the Oriental is liable. The shape of his smoothly-shaven head was symmetrical and of

* Pharaoh is the Hebrew form of the Egyptian Peraa—or Phrah. "The great house," "sublime house," or "high gate" is the literal meaning. *Author.* —A remnant of the idea seems to survive in the title "The Sublime Porte." *Translator.*

a long oval; his forehead was neither broad nor high, but his profile was unusually delicate, and his face striking; his lips were thin and dry, and his large and piercing eyes, though neither fiery nor brilliant, and usually cast down to the ground under his thick eyebrows, were raised with a full, clear, dispassionate gaze when it was necessary to see and to examine.

The poet of the House of Seti, the young Pentaur, who knew these eyes, had celebrated them in song, and had likened them to a well-disciplined army which the general allows to rest before and after the battle, so that they may march in full strength to victory in the fight.

The refined deliberateness of his nature had in it much that was royal as well as priestly; it was partly intrinsic and born with him, partly the result of his own mental self-control. He had many enemies, but calumny seldom dared to attack the high character of Ameni.

The high-priest looked up in astonishment, as the disturbance in the court of the temple broke in on his studies.

The room in which he was sitting was spacious and cool; the lower part of the walls was lined with earthenware tiles, the upper half plastered and painted. But little was visible of the masterpieces of the artists of the establishment, for almost everywhere they were concealed by wooden closets and shelves, in which were papyrus-rolls and wax-tablets. A large table, a couch covered with a panther's skin, a footstool in front of it, and on it a crescent-shaped support for the head, made of ivory,* several seats, a stand with

* A support of crescent form on which the Egyptians rested their heads. Many specimens were found in the catacombs, and similar objects are still used in Nubia.

beakers and jugs, and another with flasks of all sizes, saucers, and boxes, composed the furniture of the room, which was lighted by three lamps, shaped like birds and filled with kiki oil.*

Ameni wore a fine pleated robe of snow-white linen, which reached to his ankles, round his hips was a scarf adorned with fringes, which in front formed an apron, with broad, stiffened ends which fell to his knees; a wide belt of white and silver brocade confined the drapery of his robe. Round his throat and far down on his bare breast hung a necklace more than a span deep, composed of pearls and agates, and his upper arm was covered with broad gold bracelets. He rose from the ebony seat with lion's feet, on which he sat, and beckoned to a servant who squatted by one of the walls of the sitting-room. He rose and without any word of command from his master, he silently and carefully placed on the high-priest's bare head a long and thick curled wig,** and threw a leopard-skin, with its head and claws overlaid with gold-leaf, over his shoulders. A second servant held a metal mirror before Ameni, in which he cast a look as he settled the panther-skin and head-gear.

A third servant was handing him the crosier, the insignia of his dignity as a prelate, when a priest entered and announced the scribe Pentaur.

Ameni nodded, and the young priest who had talked with the princess Bent-Anat at the temple-gate came into the room.

Pentaur knelt and kissed the hand of the prelate,

* Castor oil, which was used in the lamps.

** Egyptians belonging to the higher classes wore wigs on their shaven heads. Several are preserved in museums.

who gave him his blessing, and in a clear sweet voice, and rather formal and unfamiliar language—as if he were reading rather than speaking, said—

"Rise, my son; your visit will save me a walk at this untimely hour, since you can inform me of what disturbs the disciples in our temple. Speak."

"Little of consequence has occurred, holy father," replied Pentaur. "Nor would I have disturbed thee at this hour, but that a quite unnecessary tumult has been raised by the youths; and that the princess Bent-Anat appeared in person to request the aid of a physician. The unusual hour and the retinue that followed her—"

"Is the daughter of Pharaoh sick?" asked the prelate.

"No, father. She is well—even to wantonness, since—wishing to prove the swiftness of her horses—she ran over the daughter of the paraschites Pinem. Noble-hearted as she is, she herself carried the sorely-wounded girl to her house."

"She entered the dwelling of the unclean."

"Thou hast said."

"And she now asks to be purified?"

"I thought I might venture to absolve her, father, for the purest humanity led her to the act, which was no doubt a breach of discipline, but—"

"But," asked the high-priest in a grave voice, and he raised his eyes which he had hitherto kept fixed on the ground.

"But," said the young priest, and now his eyes fell, "which can surely be no crime. When Ra* in his golden bark sails across the heavens, his light falls as freely and as bountifully on the hut of the despised

* The Egyptian Sun-god.

poor as on the Palace of the Pharaohs; and shall the tender human heart withhold its pure light—which is benevolence—from the wretched, only because they are base?"

"It is the poet Pentaur that speaks," said the prelate, "and not the priest to whom the privilege was given to be initiated into the highest grade of the sages, and whom I call my brother and my equal. I have no advantage over you, young man, but perishable learning, which the past has won for you as much as for me—nothing but certain perceptions and experiences that offer nothing new to the world, but teach us, indeed, that it is our part to maintain all that is ancient in living efficacy and practice. That which you promised a few weeks since, I many years ago vowed to the Gods; to guard knowledge as the exclusive possession of the initiated. Like fire, it serves those who know its uses to the noblest ends, but in the hands of children—and the people, the mob, can never ripen into manhood—it is a destroying brand, raging and unextinguishable, devouring all around it, and destroying all that has been built and beautified by the past. And how can we remain 'the Sages' and continue to develop and absorb all learnning within the shelter of our temples, not only without endangering the weak, but for their benefit? You know and have sworn to act after that knowledge. To bind the crowd to the faith and the institutions of the fathers is your duty—is the duty of every priest. Times have changed, my son; under the old kings the fire, of which I spoke figuratively to you—the poet—was enclosed in brazen walls which the people passed stupidly by. Now I see breaches in the old

fortifications; the eyes of the uninitiated have been sharpened, and one tells the other what he fancies he has spied, though half-blinded, through the glowing rifts."

A slight emotion had given energy to the tones of the speaker, and while he held the poet spell-bound with his piercing glance he continued:

"We curse and expel any one of the initiated who enlarges these breaches; we punish even the friend who idly neglects to repair and close them with beaten brass!"

"My father!" cried Pentaur, raising his head in astonishment while the blood mounted to his cheeks.

The high-priest went up to him and laid both hands on his shoulders.

They were of equal height and of equally symmetrical build; even the outline of their features was similar. Nevertheless no one would have taken them to be even distantly related; their countenances were so infinitely unlike in expression.

On the face of one were stamped a strong will and the power of firmly guiding his life and commanding himself; on the other, an amiable desire to overlook the faults and defects of the world, and to contemplate life as it painted itself in the transfiguring magic-mirror of his poet's soul. Frankness and enjoyment spoke in his sparkling eye, but the subtle smile on his lips when he was engaged in a discussion, or when his soul was stirred, betrayed that Pentaur, far from childlike carelessness, had fought many a severe mental battle, and had tasted the dark waters of doubt.

At this moment mingled feelings were struggling

in his soul. He felt as if he must withstand the speaker; and yet the powerful presence of the other exercised so strong an influence over his mind, long trained to submission, that he was silent, and a pious thrill passed through him when Ameni's hands were laid on his shoulders.

"I blame you," said the high-priest, while he firmly held the young man, "nay, to my sorrow I must chastise you; and yet," he said, stepping back and taking his right hand, "I rejoice in the necessity, for I love you and honor you, as one whom the Unnameable has blessed with high gifts and destined to great things. Man leaves a weed to grow unheeded or roots it up: but you are a noble tree, and I am like the gardener who has forgotten to provide it with a prop, and who is now thankful to have detected a bend that reminds him of his neglect. You look at me enquiringly, and I can see in your eyes that I seem to you a severe judge. Of what are you accused? You have suffered an institution of the past to be set aside. It does not matter —so the short-sighted and heedless think; but I say to you, you have doubly transgressed, because the wrong-doer was the king's daughter, whom all look up to, great and small, and whose actions may serve as an example to the people. On whom then must a breach of the ancient institutions lie with the darkest stain if not on the highest in rank? In a few days it will be said the paraschites are men even as we are, and the old law to avoid them as unclean is folly. And will the reflections of the people, think you, end there, when it is so easy for them to say that he who errs in one point may as well fail in all? In questions of faith, my son, nothing is insignificant. If we open one tower

to the enemy he is master of the whole fortress. In these unsettled times our sacred lore is like a chariot on the declivity of a precipice, and under the wheels thereof a stone. A child takes away the stone, and the chariot rolls down into the abyss and is dashed to pieces. Imagine the princess to be that child, and the stone a loaf that she would fain give to feed a beggar. Would you then give it to her if your father and your mother and all that is dear and precious to you were in the chariot? Answer not! the princess will visit the paraschites again to-morrow. You must await her in the man's hut, and there inform her that she has transgressed and must crave to be purified by us. For this time you are excused from any further punishment. Heaven has bestowed on you a gifted soul. Strive for that which is wanting to you—the strength to subdue, to crush for One—and you know that One—all things else—even the misguiding voice of your heart, the treacherous voice of your judgment.—But stay! send leeches to the house of the paraschites, and desire them to treat the injured girl as though she were the queen herself. Who knows where the man dwells?"

"The princess," replied Pentaur, "has left Paaker, the king's pioneer, behind in the temple to conduct the leeches to the house of Pinem."

The grave high-priest smiled and said. "Paaker! to attend the daughter of a paraschites."

Pentaur half beseechingly and half in fun raised his eyes which he had kept cast down. "And Pentaur," he murmured, "the gardener's son! who is to refuse absolution to the king's daughter!"

"Pentaur, the minister of the Gods—Pentaur, the priest—has not to do with the daughter of the king,

but with the transgressor of the sacred institutions," replied Ameni gravely. "Let Paaker know I wish to speak with him."

The poet bowed low and quitted the room, the high-priest muttered to himself: "He is not yet what he should be, and speech is of no effect with him."

For a while he was silent, walking to and fro in meditation; then he said half aloud, "And the boy is destined to great things. What gifts of the Gods doth he lack? He has the faculty of learning—of thinking—of feeling—of winning all hearts, even mine. He keeps himself undefiled and separate—" suddenly the prelate paused and struck his hand on the back of a chair that stood by him. "I have it; he has not yet felt the fire of ambition. We will light it for his profit and our own."

CHAPTER III.

PENTAUR hastened to execute the commands of the high-priest. He sent a servant to escort Paaker, who was waiting in the forecourt, into the presence of Ameni while he himself repaired to the physicians to impress on them the most watchful care of the unfortunate girl.

Many proficients in the healing arts* were brought up in the house of Seti, but few used to remain after passing the examination for the degree of Scribe. The

* What is here stated with regard to the medical schools is principally derived from the medical writings of the Egyptians themselves, among which the "Ebers Papyrus" holds the first place, "Medical Papyrus I." of Berlin the second, and a hieratic MS. in London which, like the first mentioned, has come down to us from the 18th dynasty, takes the third. Also see Herodotus II. 84. Diodorus I. 82.

most gifted were sent to Heliopolis, where flourished, in the great "Hall of the Ancients," the most celebrated medical faculty of the whole country, whence they returned to Thebes, endowed with the highest honors in surgery, in ocular treatment, or in any other branch of their profession, and became physicians to the king or made a living by imparting their learning and by being called in to consult on serious cases.

Naturally most of the doctors lived on the east bank of the Nile, in Thebes proper, and even in private houses with their families; but each was attached to a priestly college.

Whoever required a physician sent for him, not to his own house, but to a temple. There a statement was required of the complaint from which the sick person was suffering, and it was left to the principal of the medical staff of the sanctuary to select that master of the healing art whose special knowledge appeared to him to be suited for the treatment of the case.

Like all priests, the physicians lived on the income which came to them from their landed property, from the gifts of the king, the contributions of the laity, and the share which was given them of the state-revenues; they expected no honorarium from their patients, but the restored sick seldom neglected making a present to the sanctuary whence a physician had come to them, and it was not unusual for the priestly leech to make the recovery of the sufferer conditional on certain gifts to be offered to the temple.

The medical knowledge of the Egyptians was, according to every indication, very considerable; but it was natural that physicians, who stood by the bed of

sickness as "ordained servants of the Divinity," should not be satisfied with a rational treatment of the sufferer, and should rather think that they could not dispense with the mystical effects of prayers and vows.

Among the professors of medicine in the House of Seti there were men of the most different gifts and bent of mind; but Pentaur was not for a moment in doubt as to which should be entrusted with the treatment of the girl who had been run over, and for whom he felt the greatest sympathy.

The one he chose was the grandson of a celebrated leech, long since dead, whose name of Nebsecht he had inherited, and a beloved school-friend and old comrade of Pentaur.

This young man had from his earliest years shown high and hereditary talent for the profession to which he had devoted himself; he had selected surgery* for his special province at Heliopolis, and would certainly have attained the dignity of teacher there if an impediment in his speech had not debarred him from the vivâ voce recitation of formulas and prayers.

This circumstance, which was deeply lamented by his parents and tutors, was in fact, in the best opinions, an advantage to him; for it often happens that apparent superiority does us damage, and that from apparent defect springs the saving of our life.

Thus, while the companions of Nebsecht were employed in declaiming or in singing, he, thanks to his fettered tongue, could give himself up to his inherited and almost passionate love of observing organic life; and

* Among the six hermetic books of medicine mentioned by Clement of Alexandria, was one devoted to surgical instruments; otherwise the very badly-set fractures found in some of the mummies do little honor to the Egyptian surgeons.

his teachers indulged up to a certain point his innate spirit of investigation, and derived benefit from his knowledge of the human and animal structures, and from the dexterity of his handling.

His deep aversion for the magical part of his profession would have brought him heavy punishment, nay very likely would have cost him expulsion from the craft, if he had ever given it expression in any form. But Nebsecht's was the silent and reserved nature of the learned man, who free from all desire of external recognition, finds a rich satisfaction in the delights of investigation; and he regarded every demand on him to give proof of his capacity, as a vexatious but unavoidable intrusion on his unassuming but laborious and fruitful investigations.

Nebsecht was dearer and nearer to Pentaur than any other of his associates.

He admired his learning and skill; and when the slightly-built surgeon, who was indefatigable in his wanderings, roved through the thickets by the Nile, the desert, or the mountain range, the young poet-priest accompanied him with pleasure and with great benefit to himself, for his companion observed a thousand things to which without him he would have remained for ever blind; and the objects around him, which were known to him only by their shapes, derived connection and significance from the explanations of the naturalist, whose intractable tongue moved freely when it was required to expound to his friend the peculiarities of organic beings whose development he had been the first to detect.

The poet was dear in the sight of Nebsecht, and he loved Pentaur, who possessed all the gifts he lacked; manly beauty, childlike lightness of heart, the frankest

openness, artistic power, and the gift of expressing in word and song every emotion that stirred his soul.

The poet was as a novice in the order in which Nebsecht was master, but quite capable of understanding its most difficult points; so it happened that Nebsecht attached greater value to his judgment than to that of his own colleagues, who showed themselves fettered by prejudice, while Pentaur's decision always was free and unbiassed.

The naturalist's room lay on the ground floor, and had no living-rooms above it, being under one of the granaries attached to the temple. It was as large as a public hall, and yet Pentaur, making his way towards the silent owner of the room, found it everywhere strewed with thick bundles of every variety of plant, with cages of palm-twigs piled four or five high, and a number of jars, large and small, covered with perforated paper. Within these prisons moved all sorts of living creatures, from the jerboa, the lizard of the Nile, and a light-colored species of owl, to numerous specimens of frogs, snakes, scorpions and beetles.

On the solitary table in the middle of the room, near to a writing-stand, lay bones of animals, with various sharp flints and bronze knives.

In a corner of this room lay a mat, on which stood a wooden head-prop, indicating that the naturalist was in the habit of sleeping on it.

When Pentaur's step was heard on the threshold of this strange abode, its owner pushed a rather large object under the table, threw a cover over it, and hid a sharp flint scalpel* fixed into a wooden handle, which

* The Egyptians seem to have preferred to use flint instruments for surgical purposes, at any rate for the opening of bodies and for circumcision. Many flint instruments have been found and preserved in museums.

he had just been using, in the folds of his robe—as a school-boy might hide some forbidden game from his master. Then he crossed his arms, to give himself the aspect of a man who is dreaming in harmless idleness.

The solitary lamp, which was fixed on a high stand near his chair, shed a scanty light, which, however, sufficed to show him his trusted friend Pentaur, who had disturbed Nebsecht in his prohibited occupations. Nebsecht nodded to him as he entered, and, when he had seen who it was, said:

"You need not have frightened me so!" Then he drew out from under the table the object he had hidden —a living rabbit fastened down to a board—and continued his interrupted observations on the body, which he had opened and fastened back with wooden pins while the heart continued to beat.

He took no further notice of Pentaur, who for some time silently watched the investigator; then he laid his hand on his shoulder and said:

"Lock your door more carefully, when you are busy with forbidden things."

"They took—they took away the bar of the door lately," stammered the naturalist, "when they caught me dissecting the hand of the forger Ptahmes."*

"The mummy of the poor man will find its right hand wanting," answered the poet.

"He will not want it out there."

"Did you bury the least bit of an image in his grave?"**

"Nonsense."

* The law sentenced forgers to lose a hand.

** Small statuettes, placed in graves to help the dead in the work performed in the under-world. They have axes and ploughs in their hands, and seed-bags on their backs. The sixth chapter of the Book of the Dead is inscribed on nearly all.

"You go very far, Nebsecht, and are not foreseeing. 'He who needlessly hurts an innocent animal shall be served in the same way by the spirits of the nether-world,' says the law; but I see what you will say. You hold it lawful to put a beast to pain, when you can thereby increase that knowledge by which you alleviate the sufferings of man, and enrich—"

"And do not you?"

A gentle smile passed over Pentaur's face; he leaned over the animal and said:

"How curious! the little beast still lives and breathes; a man would have long been dead under such treatment. His organism is perhaps of a more precious, subtle, and so more fragile nature?"

Nebsecht shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps!" he said.

"I thought you must know."

"I—how should I?" asked the leech. "I have told you—they would not even let me try to find out how the hand of a forger moves."

"Consider, the scripture tells us the passage of the soul depends on the preservation of the body."

Nebsecht looked up with his cunning little eyes and shrugging his shoulders, said:

"Then no doubt it is so: however these things do not concern me. Do what you like with the souls of men; I seek to know something of their bodies, and patch them when they are damaged as well as may be."

"Nay—Toth be praised,* at least you need not deny that you are master in that art."

* Toth is the god of the learned and of physicians. The Ibis was sacred to him, and he was usually represented as Ibis-headed. Ra created him "a

"Who is master," asked Nebsecht, "excepting God? I can do nothing, nothing at all, and guide my instruments with hardly more certainty than a sculptor condemned to work in the dark."

"Something like the blind Resu then," said Pentaur smiling, "who understood painting better than all the painters who could see."

"In my operations there is a 'better' and a 'worse;'" said Nebsecht, "but there is nothing 'good.'"

"Then we must be satisfied with the 'better,' and I have come to claim it," said Pentaur.

"Are you ill?"

"Isis be praised, I feel so well that I could uproot a palm-tree, but I would ask you to visit a sick girl. The princess Bent-Anat—"

"The royal family has its own physicians."

"Let me speak! the princess Bent-Anat has run over a young girl, and the poor child is seriously hurt."

"Indeed," said the student reflectively. "Is she over there in the city, or here in the Necropolis?"

"Here. She is in fact the daughter of a paraschites."

"Of a paraschites?" exclaimed Nebsecht, once more slipping the rabbit under the table, "then I will go."

"You curious fellow. I believe you expect to find something strange among the unclean folk."

beautiful light to show the name of his evil enemy." Originally the Moon-god, he became the lord of time and measure. He is the weigher, the philosopher among the gods, the lord of writing, of art and of learning. The Greeks called him Hermes Trismegistus, *i. e.* threefold or "very great" which was, in fact, in imitation of the Egyptians, whose name Toth or Techuti signified twofold, in the same way "very great."

"That is my affair; but I will go. What is the man's name?"

"Pinem."

"There will be nothing to be done with him," muttered the student, "however—who knows?"

With these words he rose, and opening a tightly closed flask he dropped some strychnine* on the nose and in the mouth of the rabbit, which immediately ceased to breathe. Then he laid it in a box and said, "I am ready."

"But you cannot go out of doors in this stained dress."

The physician nodded assent, and took from a chest a clean robe, which he was about to throw on over the other; but Pentaur hindered him. "First take off your working dress," he said laughing. "I will help you. But, by Besa,** you have as many coats as an onion."

Pentaur was known as a mighty laugher among his companions, and his loud voice rung in the quiet room, when he discovered that his friend was about to put a third clean robe over two dirty ones, and wear no less than three dresses at once.

Nebsecht laughed too, and said, "Now I know why my clothes were so heavy, and felt so intolerably hot at noon. While I get rid of my superfluous clothing, will you go and ask the high-priest if I have leave to quit the temple."

"He commissioned me to send a leech to the

* Strychnine was a poison well known to the Egyptians.

** The god of the toilet of the Egyptians. He was represented as a deformed pigmy. He led the women to conquest in love, and the men in war. He was probably of Arab origin.

paraschites, and added that the girl was to be treated like a queen."

"Ameni? and did he know that we have to do with a paraschites?"

"Certainly."

"Then I shall begin to believe that broken limbs may be set with vows—aye, vows! You know I cannot go alone to the sick, because my leather tongue is unable to recite the sentences or to wring rich offerings for the temple from the dying. Go, while I undress, to the prophet Gagabu and beg him to send the pastophorus Teta, who usually accompanies me."

"I would seek a young assistant rather than that blind old man."

"Not at all. I should be glad if he would stay at home, and only let his tongue creep after me like an eel or a slug. Head and heart have nothing to do with his wordy operations, and they go on like an ox treading out corn."*

"It is true," said Pentaur; "just lately I saw the old man singing out his litanies by a sick-bed, and all the time quietly counting the dates, of which they had given him a whole sack-full."

"He will be unwilling to go to the paraschites, who is poor, and he would sooner seize the whole brood of scorpions yonder than take a piece of bread from the hand of the unclean. Tell him to come and fetch me, and drink some wine. There stands three days' allowance; in this hot weather it dims my sight.

* In Egypt, as in Palestine, beasts trod out the corn, as we learn from many pictures in the catacombs, even in the remotest ages; often with the addition of a weighted sledge, to the runners of which rollers are attached. It is now called *noreg*.

Does the paraschites live to the north or south of the Necropolis?"

"I think to the north. Paaker, the king's pioneer, will show you the way."

"He!" exclaimed the student, laughing. "What day in the calendar is this, then?* The child of a paraschites is to be tended like a princess, and a leech have a noble to guide him, like the Pharaoh himself! I ought to have kept on my three robes!"

"The night is warm," said Pentaur.

"But Paaker has strange ways with him. Only the day before yesterday I was called to a poor boy whose collar bone he had simply smashed with his stick. If I had been the princess's horse I would rather have trodden him down than a poor little girl."

"So would I," said Pentaur laughing, and left the room to request the second prophet Gagabu, who was also the head of the medical staff of the House of Seti, to send the blind pastophorus** Teta, with his friend as singer of the litany.

CHAPTER IV.

PENTAUR knew where to seek Gagabu, for he himself had been invited to the banquet which the prophet had prepared in honor of two sages who had

* Calendars have been preserved, the completest is the papyrus Sallier IV., which has been admirably treated by F. Chabas. Many days are noted as lucky, unlucky, etc. In the temples many Calendars of feasts have been found, the most perfect at Medinet Abu, deciphered by Dümich.

** The Pastophori were an order of priests to which the physicians belonged.

lately come to the House of Seti from the university of Chennu.*

In an open court, surrounded by gaily-painted wooden pillars, and lighted by many lamps, sat the feasting priests in two long rows on comfortable arm-chairs. Before each stood a little table, and servants were occupied in supplying them with the dishes and drinks, which were laid out on a splendid table in the middle of the court. Joints of gazelle,** roast geese and ducks, meat pasties, artichokes, asparagus and other vegetables, and various cakes and sweetmeats were carried to the guests, and their beakers well-filled with the choice wines of which there was never any lack in the lofts of the House of Seti.*** In the spaces between the guests stood servants with metal bowls, in which they might wash their hands, and towels of fine linen.

When their hunger was appeased, the wine flowed more freely, and each guest was decked with sweetly-smelling flowers, whose odor was supposed to add to the vivacity of the conversation.

Many of the sharers in this feast wore long, snow-white garments, and were of the class of the Initiated into the mysteries of the faith, as well as chiefs of the different orders of priests of the House of Seti.

The second prophet, Gagabu, who was to-day charged with the conduct of the feast by Ameni—

* Chennu was situated on a bend of the Nile, not far from the Nubian frontier; it is now called Gebel Silsileh; it was in very ancient times the seat of a celebrated seminary.

** Gazelles were tamed for domestic animals: we find them in the representations of the herds of the wealthy Egyptians and as slaughtered for food. The banquet is described from the pictures of feasts which have been found in the tombs.

*** Cellars maintain the mean temperature of the climate, and in Egypt are hot. Wine is best preserved in shady and airy lofts.

who on such occasions only showed himself for a few minutes—was a short, stout man with a bald and almost spherical head. His features were those of a man of advancing years, but well-formed, and his smoothly-shaven, plump cheeks were well-rounded. His grey eyes looked out cheerfully and observantly, but had a vivid sparkle when he was excited and began to twitch his thick, sensual mouth.

Close by him stood the vacant, highly-ornamented chair of the high-priest, and next to him sat the priests arrived from Chennu, two tall, dark-colored old men. The remainder of the company was arranged in the order of precedency, which they held in the priests' colleges, and which bore no relation to their respective ages.

But strictly as the guests were divided with reference to their rank, they mixed without distinction in the conversation.

"We know how to value our call to Thebes," said the elder of the strangers from Chennu, Tuauf, whose essays were frequently used in the schools,* "for while, on one hand, it brings us into the neighborhood of the Pharaoh, where life, happiness, and safety flourish, on the other it procures us the honor of counting ourselves among your number; for, though the university of Chennu in former times was so happy as to bring up many great men, whom she could call her own, she can no longer compare with the House of Seti. Even Heliopolis and Memphis are behind you; and if I, my humble self, nevertheless venture boldly among you, it is because I ascribe your success as much to the active influence of the Divinity in your temple, which may promote my acquirements and achievements, as to your

* Some of them are still in existence.

great gifts and your industry, in which I will not be behind you. I have already seen your high-priest Ameni—what a man! And who does not know thy name, Gagabu, or thine, Meriapu?"

"And which of you," asked the other new-comer, "may we greet as the author of the most beautiful hymn to Amon, which was ever sung in the land of the Sycamore? Which of you is Pentaur?"

"The empty chair yonder," answered Gagabu, pointing to a seat at the lower end of the table, "is his. He is the youngest of us all, but a great future awaits him."

"And his songs," added the elder of the strangers.

"Without doubt," replied the chief of the haruspices,* an old man with a large grey curly head, that seemed too heavy for his thin neck, which stretched forward—perhaps from the habit of constantly watching for signs—while his prominent eyes glowed with a fanatical gleam. "Without doubt the Gods have granted great gifts to our young friend; but it remains to be proved how he will use them. I perceive a certain freedom of thought in the youth, which pains me deeply. Although in his poems his flexible style certainly follows the prescribed forms, his ideas transcend all tradition; and even in the hymns intended for the ears of the people I find turns of thought, which might well be called treason to the mysteries which only a few months ago he swore to keep secret. For instance he says—and we sing—and the laity hear—

"One only art Thou, Thou Creator of beings;
And Thou only makest all that is created.

And again—

* One of the orders of priests in the Egyptian hierarchy.

He is one only, Alone, without equal;
Dwelling alone in the holiest of holies."*

Such passages as these ought not to be sung in public, at least in times like ours, when new ideas come in upon us from abroad, like the swarms of locusts from the East."

"Spoken to my very soul!" cried the treasurer of the temple, "Ameni initiated this boy too early into the mysteries."

"In my opinion, and I am his teacher," said Gagabu, "our brotherhood may be proud of a member who adds so brilliantly to the fame of our temple. The people hear the hymns without looking closely at the meaning of the words. I never saw the congregation more devout, than when the beautiful and deeply-felt song of praise was sung at the feast of the stairs.**

"Pentaur was always thy favorite," said the former speaker. "Thou wouldst not permit in any one else many things that are allowed to him. His hymns are nevertheless to me and to many others a dangerous performance; and canst thou dispute the fact that we have grounds for grave anxiety, and that things happen and circumstances grow up around us which hinder us, and at last may perhaps crush us, if we do not, while there is yet time, inflexibly oppose them?"

"Thou bringest sand to the desert, and sugar to sprinkle over honey," exclaimed Gagabu, and his lips began to twitch. "Nothing is now as it ought to be, and there will be a hard battle to fight; not with the sword, but with this—and this." And the impatient

* Hymn to Amon preserved in a papyrus roll at Bulaq, and deciphered by Grehaût and L. Stern.

** A particularly solemn festival in honor of Amon-Chem, held in the temple of Medinet-Abu.

man touched his forehead and his lips. "And who is there more competent than my disciple? There is the champion of our cause, a second cap of Hor, that overthrew the evil one with winged sunbeams, and you come and would clip his wings and blunt his claws! Alas, alas, my lords! will you never understand that a lion roars louder than a cat, and the sun shines brighter than an oil-lamp? Let Pentuar alone, I say; or you will do as the man did, who, for fear of the toothache, had his sound teeth drawn. Alas, alas, in the years to come we shall have to bite deep into the flesh, till the blood flows, if we wish to escape being eaten up ourselves!"

"The enemy is not unknown to us also," said the elder priest from Chennu, "although we, on the remote southern frontier of the kingdom, have escaped many evils that in the north have eaten into our body like a cancer. Here foreigners are now hardly looked upon at all as unclean and devilish."*

"Hardly?" exclaimed the chief of the haruspices; "they are invited, caressed, and honored. Like dust, when the simoon blows through the chinks of a wooden house, they crowd into the houses and temples, taint our manners and language;** nay, on the throne of the successors of Ra sits a descendant—"

"Presumptuous man!" cried the voice of the high-priest, who at this instant entered the hall, "Hold your tongue, and be not so bold as to wag it against him who is our king, and wields the sceptre in this kingdom as the Vicar of Ra."

The speaker bowed and was silent, then he and all the company rose to greet Ameni, who bowed to them

* "Typhonisch," belonging to Typhon or Seth.—*Translator.*

** At no period did Egyptian writers use more Semitic words than during the reigns of Rameses II. and his son Mernephtah.

all with polite dignity, took his seat, and turning to Gagabu asked him carelessly:

"I find you all in most unpriestly excitement; what has disturbed your equanimity?"

"We were discussing the overwhelming influx of foreigners into Egypt, and the necessity of opposing some resistance to them."

"You will find me one of the foremost in the attempt," replied Ameni. "We have endured much already, and news has arrived from the north, which grieves me deeply."

"Have our troops sustained a defeat?"

"They continue to be victorious, but thousands of our countrymen have fallen victims in the fight or on the march. Rameses demands fresh reinforcements. The pioneer, Paaker, has brought me a letter from our brethren who accompany the king, and delivered a document from him to the Regent, which contains the order to send to him fifty thousand fighting men; and as the whole of the soldier-caste and all the auxiliaries are already under arms, the bondmen of the temple, who till our acres, are to be levied, and sent into Asia."

A murmur of disapproval arose at these words. The chief of the haruspices stamped his foot, and Gagabu asked:

"What do you mean to do?"

"To prepare to obey the commands of the king," answered Ameni, "and to call the heads of the temples of the city of Amon here without delay to hold a council. Each must first in his holy of holies seek good counsel of the Celestials. When we have come to a

conclusion, we must next win the Viceroy over to our side. Who yesterday assisted at his prayers?"

"It was my turn," said the chief of the haruspices.

"Follow me to my abode, when the meal is over." commanded Ameni. "But why is our poet missing from our circle?"

At this moment Pentaur came into the hall, and while he bowed easily and with dignity to the company and low before Ameni, he prayed him to grant that the pastophorus Teta should accompany the leech Nebsecht to visit the daughter of the paraschites.

Ameni nodded consent and exclaimed: "They must make haste. Paaker waits for them at the great gate, and will accompany them in my chariot."

As soon as Pentaur had left the party of feasters, the old priest from Chennu exclaimed, as he turned to Ameni:

"Indeed, holy father, just such a one and no other had I pictured your poet. He is like the Sun-god, and his demeanor is that of a prince. He is no doubt of noble birth."

"His father is a homely gardener," said the high-priest, "who indeed tills the land apportioned to him with industry and prudence, but is of humble birth and rough exterior. He sent Pentaur to the school* at an early age, and we have brought up the wonderfully gifted boy to be what he now is."

"What office does he fill here in the temple?"

"He instructs the elder pupils of the high-school in grammar and eloquence; he is also an excellent ob-

* It is certain from the papyri that people of the lower orders could be received into the priesthood. Separate castes like those of the Hindoos were unknown to the Egyptians.

server of the starry heavens, and a most skilled interpreter of dreams," replied Gagabu. "But here he is again. To whom is Paaker conducting our stammering physician and his assistant?"

"To the daughter of the paraschites, who has been run over," answered Pentaur. "But what a rough fellow this pioneer is. His voice hurts my ears, and he spoke to our leeches as if they had been his slaves."

"He was vexed with the commission the princess had devolved on him," said the high-priest benevolently, "and his unamiable disposition is hardly mitigated by his real piety."

"And yet," said an old priest, "his brother, who left us some years ago, and who had chosen me for his guide and teacher, was a particularly loveable and docile youth."

"And his father," said Ameni. "was one of the most superior, energetic, and withal subtle-minded of men."

"Then he has derived his bad peculiarities from his mother?"

"By no means. She is a timid, amiable, soft-hearted woman."

"But must the child always resemble its parents?" asked Pentaur. "Among the sons of the sacred bull, sometimes not one bears the distinguishing mark of his father."

"And if Paaker's father were indeed an Apis," said Gagabu laughing, "according to your view the pioneer himself belongs, alas! to the peasant's stable."

Pentaur did not contradict him, but said with a smile:

"Since he left the school bench, where his school-

fellows called him the wild ass on account of his unruliness, he has remained always the same. He was stronger than most of them, and yet they knew no greater pleasure than putting him in a rage."

"Children are so cruel!" said Ameni. "They judge only by appearances, and never enquire into the causes of them. The deficient are as guilty in their eyes as the idle, and Paaker could put forward small claims to their indulgence. I encourage freedom and merriment," he continued turning to the priests from Chennu, "among our disciples, for in fettering the fresh enjoyment of youth we lame our best assistant. The excrescences on the natural growth of boys cannot be more surely or painlessly extirpated than in their wild games. The school-boy is the school-boy's best tutor."

"But Paaker," said the priest Meriapu, "was not improved by the provocations of his companions. Constant contests with them increased that roughness which now makes him the terror of his subordinates and alienates all affection."

"He is the most unhappy of all the many youths, who were intrusted to my care," said Ameni, "and I believe I know why,—he never had a childlike disposition, even when in years he was still a child, and the Gods had denied him the heavenly gift of good humor. Youth should be modest, and he was assertive from his childhood. He took the sport of his companions for earnest, and his father, who was unwise only as a tutor, encouraged him to resistance instead of to forbearance, in the idea that he thus would be steeled to the hard life of a Mohar."*

* The severe duties of the Mohar are well known from the papyrus of Anastasi I. in the Brit. Mus., which has been ably treated by F. Chabas, Voyage d'un Egyptien.

"I have often heard the deeds of the Mohar spoken of," said the old priest from Chennu, "yet I do not exactly know what his office requires of him."

"He has to wander among the ignorant and insolent people of hostile provinces, and to inform himself of the kind and number of the population, to investigate the direction of the mountains, valleys, and rivers, to set forth his observations, and to deliver them to the house of war,* so that the march of the troops may be guided by them."

"The Mohar then must be equally skilled as a warrior and as a Scribe."

"As thou sayest; and Paaker's father was not a hero only, but at the same time a writer, whose close and clear information depicted the country through which he had travelled as plainly as if it were seen from a mountain height. He was the first who took the title of Mohar. The king held him in such high esteem, that he was inferior to no one but the king himself, and the minister of the house of war."

"Was he of noble race?"

"Of one of the oldest and noblest in the country. His father was the noble warrior Assa," answered the haruspex, "and he therefore, after he himself had attained the highest consideration and vast wealth, escorted home the niece of the King Hor-em-heb, who would have had a claim to the throne, as well as the Regent, if the grandfather of the present Rameses had not seized it from the old family by violence."

"Be careful of your words," said Ameni, interrupting the rash old man. "Rameses I. was and is the grand-

* Corresponding to our minister of war. A person of the highest importance even in the earliest times.

father of our sovereign, and in the king's veins, from his mother's side, flows the blood of the legitimate descendants of the Sun-god."

"But fuller and purer in those of the Regent," the haruspex ventured to retort.

"But Rameses wears the crown," cried Ameni, "and will continue to wear it so long as it pleases the Gods. Reflect!—your hairs are grey, and seditious words are like sparks, which are borne by the wind, but which, if they fall, may set our home in a blaze. Continue your feasting, my lords; but I would request you to speak no more this evening of the king and his new decree. You, Pentaur, fulfil my orders to-morrow morning with energy and prudence."

The high-priest bowed and left the feast.

As soon as the door was shut behind him, the old priest from Chennu spoke.

"What we have learned concerning the pioneer of the king, a man who holds so high an office, surprises me. Does he distinguish himself by a special acuteness?"

"He was a steady learner, but of moderate ability."

"Is the rank of Mohar then as high as that of a prince of the empire?"

"By no means."

"How then is it—?"

"It is, as it is," interrupted Gagabu. "The son of the vine-dresser has his mouth full of grapes, and the child of the door-keeper opens the lock with words."

"Never mind," said an old priest who had hitherto kept silence. "Paaker earned for himself the post of Mohar, and possesses many praiseworthy qualities. He is indefatigable and faithful, quails before no danger,

and has always been earnestly devout from his boyhood. When the other scholars carried their pocket-money to the fruit-sellers and confectioners at the temple-gates, he would buy geese, and, when his mother sent him a handsome sum, young gazelles, to offer to the Gods on the altars. No noble in the land owns a greater treasure of charms and images of the Gods than he. To the present time he is the most pious of men, and the offerings for the dead, which he brings in the name of his late father, may be said to be positively kingly."

"We owe him gratitude for these gifts," said the treasurer, "and the high honor he pays his father, even after his death, is exceptional and far-famed."

"He emulates him in every respect," sneered Gagabu; "and though he does not resemble him in any feature, grows more and more like him. But unfortunately, it is as the goose resembles the swan, or the owl resembles the eagle. For his father's noble pride he has overbearing haughtiness; for kindly severity, rude harshness; for dignity, conceit; for perseverance, obstinacy. Devout he is, and we profit by his gifts. The treasurer may rejoice over them, and the dates off a crooked tree taste as well as those off a straight one. But if I were the Divinity I should prize them no higher than a hoopoe's crest; for He, who sees into the heart of the giver—alas! what does he see! Storms and darkness are of the dominion of Seth, and in there—in there—" and the old man struck his broad breast—"all is wrath and tumult, and there is not a gleam of the calm blue heaven of Ra, that shines soft and pure in the soul of the pious; no, not a spot as large as this wheaten-cake."

"Hast thou then sounded to the depths of his soul?" asked the haruspex.

"As this beaker!" exclaimed Gagabu, and he touched the rim of an empty drinking-vessel. "For fifteen years without ceasing. The man has been of service to us, is so still, and will continue to be. Our leeches extract salves from bitter gall and deadly poisons; and folks like these—"

"Hatred speaks in thee," said the haruspex, interrupting the indignant old man.

"Hatred!" he retorted, and his lips quivered. "Hatred?" and he struck his breast with his clenched hand. "It is true, it is no stranger to this old heart. But open thine ears, O haruspex, and all you others too shall hear. I recognize two sorts of hatred. The one is between man and man; that I have gagged, smothered, killed, annihilated—with what efforts, the Gods know. In past years I have certainly tasted its bitterness, and served it like a wasp, which, though it knows that in stinging it must die, yet uses its sting. But now I am old in years, that is in knowledge, and I know that of all the powerful impulses which stir our hearts, one only comes solely from Seth, one only belongs wholly to the Evil one—and that is hatred between man and man. Covetousness may lead to industry, sensual appetites may beget noble fruit, but hatred is a devastator, and in the soul that it occupies all that is noble grows not upwards and towards the light, but downwards to the earth and to darkness. Everything may be forgiven by the Gods, save only hatred between man and man. But there is another sort of hatred that is pleasing to the Gods, and which you must cherish if you would not

miss their presence in your souls; that is, hatred for all that hinders the growth of light and goodness and purity—the hatred of Horus for Seth. The Gods would punish me if I hated Paaker whose father was dear to me; but the spirits of darkness would possess the old heart in my breast if it were devoid of horror for the covetous and sordid devotee, who would fain buy earthly joys of the Gods with gifts of beasts and wine, as men exchange an ass for a robe, in whose soul seethe dark promptings. Paaker's gifts can no more be pleasing to the Celestials than a cask of attar of roses would please thee, haruspex, in which scorpions, centipedes, and venomous snakes were swimming. I have long led this man's prayers, and never have I heard him crave for noble gifts, but a thousand times for the injury of the men he hates."

"In the holiest prayers that come down to us from the past," said the haruspex, "the Gods are entreated to throw our enemies under our feet; and, besides, I have often heard Paaker pray fervently for the bliss of his parents."

"You are a priest and one of the initiated," cried Gagabu, "and you know not—or will not seem to know—that by the enemies for whose overthrow we pray, are meant only the demons of darkness and the outlandish peoples by whom Egypt is endangered! Paaker prayed for his parents? Ay, and so will he for his children, for they will be his future as his forefathers are his past. If he had a wife, his offerings would be for her too, for she would be the half of his own present."

"In spite of all this," said the haruspex Septah, "you are too hard in your judgment of Paaker, for

although he was born under a lucky sign, the Hathors denied him all that makes youth happy. The enemy for whose destruction he prays is Mena, the king's charioteer, and, indeed, he must have been of superhuman magnanimity or of unmanly feebleness, if he could have wished well to the man who robbed him of the beautiful wife who was destined for him."

"How could that happen?" asked the priest from Chennu. "A betrothal is sacred."*

"Paaker," replied Septah, "was attached with all the strength of his ungoverned but passionate and faithful heart to his cousin Nefert, the sweetest maid in Thebes, the daughter of Katuti, his mother's sister; and she was promised to him to wife. Then his father, whom he accompanied on his marches, was mortally wounded in Syria. The king stood by his death-bed, and granting his last request, invested his son with his rank and office. Paaker brought the mummy of his father home to Thebes, gave him princely interment, and then before the time of mourning was over, hastened back to Syria, where, while the king returned to Egypt, it was his duty to reconnoitre the new possessions. At last he could quit the scene of war with the hope of marrying Nefert. He rode his horse to death the sooner to reach the goal of his desires; but when he reached Tanis, the city of Rameses, the news met him that his affianced cousin had been given to another, the handsomest and bravest man in Thebes—the noble Mena. The more precious a thing is that we hope to possess, the more we are justified in complaining of him who contests our claim, and can

* In the demotic papyrus preserved at Bulaq (novel by Setnau) first treated by H. Brugsch, the following words occur: "Is it not the law, which unites one to another?" Betrothed brides are mentioned, for instance on the sarcophagus of Unnefer at Bulaq.

win it from us. Paaker's blood must have been as cold as a frog's if he could have forgiven Mena instead of hating him, and the cattle he has offered to the Gods to bring down their wrath on the head of the traitor may be counted by hundreds."

"And if you accept them, knowing why they are offered, you do unwisely and wrongly," exclaimed Gagabu. "If I were a layman, I would take good care not to worship a Divinity who condescends to serve the foulest human ends for a reward. But the omniscient Spirit, that rules the world in accordance with eternal laws, knows nothing of these sacrifices, which only tickle the nostrils of the evil one. The treasurer rejoices when a beautiful spotless heifer is driven in among our herds. But Seth rubs his red hands* with delight that he accepts it. My friends, I have heard the vows which Paaker has poured out over our pure altars, like hogwash that men set before swine. Pestilence and boils has he called down on Mena, and barrenness and heartache on the poor sweet woman; and I really cannot blame her for preferring a battle-horse to a hippopotamus—a Mena to a Paaker."

"Yet the Immortals must have thought his remonstrances less unjustifiable, and have stricter views as to the inviolable nature of a betrothal than you," said the treasurer, "for Nefert, during four years of married life, has passed only a few weeks with her wandering husband, and remains childless. It is hard to me to understand how you, Gagabu, who so often absolve where we condemn, can so relentlessly judge so great a benefactor to our temple."

* Red was the color of Seth and Typhon. The evil one is named the **Red**, as for instance in the papyrus of Ebers. Red-haired men were *typhonic*.

"And I fail to comprehend," exclaimed the old man, "how you—you who so willingly condemn, can so weakly excuse this—this—call him what you will."

"He is indispensable to us at this time," said the haruspex.

"Granted," said Gagabu, lowering his tone. "And I think still to make use of him, as the high-priest has done in past years with the best effect when dangers have threatened us; and a dirty road serves when it makes for the goal. The Gods themselves often permit safety to come from what is evil, but shall we therefore call evil good—or say the hideous is beautiful? Make use of the king's pioneer as you will, but do not, because you are indebted to him for gifts, neglect to judge him according to his imaginings and deeds if you would deserve your title of the Initiated and the Enlightened. Let him bring his cattle into our temple and pour his gold into our treasury, but do not defile your souls with the thought that the offerings of such a heart and such a hand are pleasing to the Divinity. Above all," and the voice of the old man had a heart-felt impressiveness, "Above all, do not flatter the erring man—and this *is* what you do—with the idea that he is walking in the right way; for your, for our first duty, O my friends, is always this—to guide the souls of those who trust in us to goodness and truth."

"Oh, my master!" cried Pentaur, "how tender is thy severity."

"I have shown the hideous sores of this man's soul," said the old man, as he rose to quit the hall. "Your praise will aggravate them, your blame will tend to heal them. Nay, if you are not content to do your duty, old Gagabu will come some day with his knife,

and will throw the sick man down and cut out the canker."

During this speech the haruspex had frequently shrugged his shoulders. Now he said, turning to the priests from Chennu—

"Gagabu is a foolish, hot-headed old man, and you have heard from his lips just such a sermon as the young scribes keep by them when they enter on the duties of the care of souls. His sentiments are excellent, but he easily overlooks small things for the sake of great ones. Ameni would tell you that ten souls, no, nor a hundred, do not matter when the safety of the whole is in question."

CHAPTER V.

The night during which the Princess Bent-Anat and her followers had knocked at the gate of the House of Seti was past.

The fruitful freshness of the dawn gave way to the heat, which began to pour down from the deep blue cloudless vault of heaven. The eye could no longer gaze at the mighty globe of light whose rays pierced the fine white dust which hung over the declivity of the hills that enclosed the city of the dead on the west. The limestone rocks showed with blinding clearness, the atmosphere quivered as if heated over a flame; each minute the shadows grew shorter and their outlines sharper.

All the beasts which we saw peopling the Necropolis in the evening had now withdrawn into their lurking places; only man defied the heat of the summer

day. Undisturbed he accomplished his daily work, and only laid his tools aside for a moment, with a sigh, when a cooling breath blew across the overflowing stream and fanned his brow.

The harbor or dock where those landed who had crossed from eastern Thebes was crowded with gay barks and boats waiting to return.

The crews of rowers and steersmen who were attached to priestly brotherhoods or noble houses, were enjoying a rest till the parties they had brought across the Nile drew towards them again in long processions.

Under a wide-spreading sycamore a vendor of eatables, spirituous drinks, and acids for cooling the water, had set up his stall, and close to him, a crowd of boatmen and drivers shouted and disputed as they passed the time in eager games at morra.*

Many sailors lay on the decks of the vessels, others on the shore; here in the thin shade of a palm tree, there in the full blaze of the sun, from those burning rays they protected themselves by spreading the cotton cloths, which served them for cloaks, over their faces.

Between the sleepers passed bondmen and slaves, brown and black, in long files one behind the other, bending under the weight of heavy burdens, which had to be conveyed to their destination at the temples for sacrifice, or to the dealers in various wares. Builders dragged blocks of stone, which had come from the quarries of Chennu and Suan,** on sledges to the site of a new temple; laborers poured water under the run-

* In Latin "micare digitis." A game still constantly played in the south of Europe, and frequently represented by the Egyptians. The games depicted in the monuments are collected by Minutoli, in the Leipziger Illustrirte Zeitung, 1852.

** The Syene of the Greeks, now called Assouan at the first cataract.

ners, that the heavily loaded and dried wood should not take fire.

All these working men were driven with sticks by their overseers, and sang at their labor; but the voices of the leaders sounded muffled and hoarse, though, when after their frugal meal they enjoyed an hour of repose, they might be heard loud enough. Their parched throats refused to sing in the noontide of their labor.

Thick clouds of gnats followed these tormented gangs, who with dull and spirit-broken endurance suffered alike the stings of the insects and the blows of their driver. The gnats pursued them to the very heart of the City of the Dead, where they joined themselves to the flies and wasps, which swarmed in countless crowds around the slaughter houses, cooks' shops, stalls of fried fish, and booths of meat, vegetable, honey, cakes and drinks, which were doing a brisk business in spite of the noontide heat and the oppressive atmosphere heated and filled with a mixture of odors.

The nearer one got to the Libyan frontier, the quieter it became, and the silence of death reigned in the broad north-west valley, where in the southern slope the father of the reigning king had caused his tomb to be hewn, and where the stone-mason of the Pharaoh had prepared a rock tomb for him.

A newly made road led into this rocky gorge, whose steep yellow and brown walls seemed scorched by the sun in many blackened spots, and looked like a ghostly array of shades that had risen from the tombs in the night and remained there.

At the entrance of this valley some blocks of stone formed a sort of doorway, and through this, indifferent

to the heat of the day, a small but brilliant troop of men was passing.

Four slender youths as staff-bearers led the procession, each clothed only with an apron and a flowing head-cloth of gold brocade; the mid-day sun played on their smooth, moist, red-brown skins, and their supple naked feet hardly stirred the stones on the road.

Behind them followed an elegant, two-wheeled chariot, with two prancing brown horses bearing tufts of red and blue feathers on their noble heads, and seeming by the bearing of their arched necks and flowing tails to express their pride in the gorgeous housings, richly embroidered in silver, purple, and blue and golden ornaments, which they wore—and even more in their beautiful, royal charioteer, Bent-Anat, the daughter of Rameses, at whose lightest word they pricked their ears, and whose little hand guided them with a scarcely perceptible touch.

Two young men dressed like the other runners followed the chariot, and kept the rays of the sun off the face of their mistress with large fans of snow-white ostrich feathers fastened to long wands.

By the side of Bent-Anat, so long as the road was wide enough to allow of it, was carried Nefert, the wife of Mena, in her gilt litter, borne by eight tawny bearers, who, running with a swift and equally measured step, did not remain far behind the trotting horses of the princess and her fan-bearers.

Both the women, whom we now see for the first time in daylight, were of remarkable but altogether different beauty.

The wife of Mena had preserved the appearance of a maiden; her large almond-shaped eyes had a

dreamy surprised look out from under her long eyelashes, and her figure of hardly the middle-height had acquired a little stoutness without losing its youthful grace. No drop of foreign blood flowed in her veins, as could be seen in the color of her skin, which was of that fresh and equal hue which holds a medium between golden yellow and bronze brown—and which to this day is so charming in the maidens of Abyssinia—in her straight nose, her well-formed brow, in her smooth but thick black hair, and in the fineness of her hands and feet, which were ornamented with circles of gold.

The maiden princess next to her had hardly reached her nineteenth year, and yet something of a womanly self-consciousness betrayed itself in her demeanor. Her stature was by almost a head taller than that of her friend, her skin was fairer, her blue eyes kind and frank, without tricks of glance, but clear and honest, her profile was noble but sharply cut, and resembled that of her father, as a landscape in the mild and softening light of the moon resembles the same landscape in the broad clear light of day. The scarcely perceptible aquiline of her nose, she inherited from her Semitic ancestors,* as well as the slightly waving abundance of her brown hair, over which she wore a blue and white striped silk kerchief; its carefully-pleated folds were held in place by a gold ring, from which in front a horned uræus** raised its head

* Many portraits have come down to us of Rameses; the finest is the noble statue preserved at Turin. A likeness has been detected between its profile, with its slightly aquiline nose, and that of Napoleon I.

** A venomous Egyptian serpent which was adopted as the symbol of sovereign power, in consequence of its swift effects for life or death. It is never wanting to the diadem of the Pharaohs.

crowned with a disk of rubies. From her left temple a large tress, plaited with gold thread, hung down to her waist, the sign of her royal birth. She wore a purple dress of fine, almost transparent stuff, that was confined with a gold belt and straps. Round her throat was fastened a necklace like a collar, made of pearls and costly stones, and hanging low down on her well-formed bosom.

Behind the princess stood her charioteer, an old officer of noble birth.

Three litters followed the chariot of the princess, and in each sat two officers of the court; then came a dozen of slaves ready for any service, and lastly a crowd of wand-bearers to drive off the idle populace, and of lightly-armed soldiers, who—dressed only in the apron and head-cloth—each bore a dagger-shaped sword in his girdle, an axe in his right hand, and in his left, in token of his peaceful service, a palm-branch.

Like dolphins round a ship, little girls in long shirt-shaped garments swarmed round the whole length of the advancing procession, bearing water-jars on their steady heads, and at a sign from any one who was thirsty were ready to give him a drink. With steps as light as the gazelle they often outran the horses, and nothing could be more graceful than the action with which the taller ones bent over with the water-jars held in both arms to the drinker.

The courtiers, cooled and shaded by waving fans, and hardly perceiving the noontide heat, conversed at their ease about indifferent matters, and the princess pitied the poor horses, who were tormented as they ran, by annoying gadflies; while the runners and soldiers, the litter-bearers and fan-bearers, the girls

with their jars and the panting slaves, were compelled to exert themselves under the rays of the mid-day sun in the service of their masters, till their sinews threatened to crack and their lungs to burst their bodies.

At a spot where the road widened, and where, to the right, lay the steep cross-valley where the last kings of the dethroned race were interred, the procession stopped at a sign from Paaker, who preceded the princess, and who drove his fiery black Syrian horses with so heavy a hand that the bloody foam fell from their bits.

When the Mohar had given the reins into the hand of a servant, he sprang from his chariot, and after the usual form of obeisance said to the princess:

"In this valley lies the loathsome den of the people, to whom thou, O princess, dost deign to do such high honor. Permit me to go forward as guide to thy party."

"We will go on foot," said the princess, "and leave our followers behind here,"

Paaker bowed, Bent-Anat threw the reins to her charioteer and sprang to the ground, the wife of Mena and the courtiers left their litters, and the fan-bearers and chamberlains were about to accompany their mistress on foot into the little valley, when she turned round and ordered, "Remain behind, all of you. Only Paaker and Nefert need go with me."

The princess hastened forward into the gorge, which was oppressive with the noon-tide heat; but she moderated her steps as soon as she observed that the frailer Nefert found it difficult to follow her.

At a bend in the road Paaker stood still, and with him Bent-Anat and Nefert. Neither of them had spoken a word during their walk. The valley was perfectly still and deserted; on the highest pinnacles of the cliff, which rose perpendicularly to the right, sat a long row of vultures, as motionless as if the mid-day heat had taken all strength out of their wings.

Paaker bowed before them as being the sacred animals of the Great Goddess of Thebes,* and the two women silently followed his example.

"There," said the Mohar, pointing to two huts close to the left cliff of the valley, built of bricks made of dried Nile-mud, "there, the neatest, next the cave in the rock."

Bent-Anat went towards the solitary hovel with a beating heart; Paaker let the ladies go first. A few steps brought them to an ill-constructed fence of cane-stalks, palm-branches, briars and straw, roughly thrown together. A heart-rending cry of pain from within the hut trembled in the air and arrested the steps of the two women. Nefert staggered and clung to her stronger companion, whose beating heart she seemed to hear. Both stood a few minutes as if spellbound, then the princess called Paaker, and said:

"You go first into the house."

Paaker bowed to the ground.

"I will call the man out," he said, "but how dare we step over his threshold. Thou knowest such a proceeding will defile us."

* She formed a triad with Amon and Chunsu under the name of Muth. The great "Sanctuary of the kingdom"—the temple of Karnak—was dedicated to them.

Nefert looked pleadingly at Bent-Anat, but the princess repeated her command.

"Go before me; I have no fear of defilement."

The Mohar still hesitated.

"Wilt thou provoke the Gods?—and defile thyself?"

But the princess let him say no more; she signed to Nefert, who raised her hands in horror and aversion; so, with a shrug of her shoulders, she left her companion behind with the Mohar, and stepped through an opening in the hedge into a little court, where lay two brown goats; a donkey with his forelegs tied together stood by, and a few hens were scattering the dust about in a vain search for food.

Soon she stood, alone, before the door of the paraschites' hovel. No one perceived her, but she could not take her eyes—accustomed only to scenes of order and splendor—from the gloomy but wonderfully strange picture, which riveted her attention and her sympathy. At last she went up to the doorway, which was too low for her tall figure. Her heart shrunk painfully within her, and she would have wished to grow smaller, and, instead of shining in splendor, to have found herself wrapped in a beggar's robe.

Could she step into this hovel decked with gold and jewels as if in mockery?—like a tyrant who should feast at a groaning table and compel the starving to look on at the banquet. Her delicate perception made her feel what trenchant discord her appearance offered to all that surrounded her, and the discord pained her; for she could not conceal from herself that misery and external meanness were here entitled to give the key-note and that her magnificence derived no especial grandeur from contrast with all these modest acces-

sories, amid dust, gloom, and suffering, but rather became disproportionate and hideous, like a giant among pigmies.

She had already gone too far to turn back, or she would willingly have done so. The longer she gazed into the hut, the more deeply she felt the impotence of her princely power, the nothingness of the splendid gifts with which she approached it, and that she might not tread the dusty floor of this wretched hovel but in all humility, and to crave a pardon.

The room into which she looked was low but not very small, and obtained from two cross lights a strange and unequal illumination; on one side the light came through the door, and on the other through an opening in the time-worn ceiling of the room, which had never before harbored so many and such different guests.

All attention was concentrated on a group, which was clearly lighted up from the doorway.

On the dusty floor of the room cowered an old woman, with dark weather-beaten features and tangled hair that had long been grey. Her black-blue cotton shirt was open over her withered bosom, and showed a blue star tattooed upon it.

In her lap she supported with her hands the head of a girl, whose slender body lay motionless on a narrow, ragged mat. The little white feet of the sick girl almost touched the threshold. Near to them squatted a benevolent-looking old man, who wore only a coarse apron, and sitting all in a heap, bent forward now and then, rubbing the child's feet with his lean hands and muttering a few words to himself.

The sufferer wore nothing but a short petticoat of

coarse light-blue stuff. Her face, half resting on the lap of the old woman, was graceful and regular in form, her eyes were half shut—like those of a child, whose soul is wrapped in some sweet dream—but from her finely chiselled lips there escaped from time to time a painful, almost convulsive sob.

An abundance of soft, but disordered reddish fair hair, in which clung a few withered flowers, fell over the lap of the old woman and on to the mat where she lay. Her cheeks were white and rosy-red, and when the young surgeon Nebsecht—who sat by her side, near his blind, stupid companion, the litany-singer—lifted the ragged cloth that had been thrown over her bosom, which had been crushed by the chariot wheel, or when she lifted her slender arm, it was seen that she had the shining fairness of those daughters of the north who not unfrequently came to Thebes among the king's prisoners of war.

The two physicians sent hither from the House of Seti sat on the left side of the maiden on a little carpet. From time to time one or the other laid his hand over the heart of the sufferer, or listened to her breathing, or opened his case of medicaments, and moistened the compress on her wounded breast with a white ointment.

In a wide circle close to the wall of the room crouched several women, young and old, friends of the paraschites, who from time to time gave expression to their deep sympathy by a piercing cry of lamentation. One of them rose at regular intervals to fill the earthen bowl by the side of the physician with fresh water. As often as the sudden coolness of a fresh compress on her hot bosom startled the sick girl, she opened her

eyes, but always soon to close them again for a longer interval, and turned them at first in surprise, and then with gentle reverence, towards a particular spot.

These glances had hitherto been unobserved by him to whom they were directed.

Leaning against the wall on the right hand side of the room, dressed in his long, snow-white priest's robe, Pentaur stood awaiting the princess. His head-dress touched the ceiling, and the narrow streak of light, which fell through the opening in the roof, streamed on his handsome head and his breast, while all around him was veiled in twilight gloom.

Once more the suffering girl looked up, and her glance this time met the eye of the young priest, who immediately raised his hand, and half-mechanically, in a low voice, uttered the words of blessing; and then once more fixed his gaze on the dingy floor, and pursued his own reflections.

Some hours since he had come hither, obedient to the orders of Ameni, to impress on the princess that she had defiled herself by touching a paraschites, and could only be cleansed again by the hand of the priests.

He had crossed the threshold of the paraschites most reluctantly, and the thought that he, of all men, had been selected to censure a deed of the noblest humanity, and to bring her who had done it to judgment, weighed upon him as a calamity.

In his intercourse with his friend Nebsecht, Pentaur had thrown off many fetters, and given place to many thoughts that his master would have held sinful and presumptuous; but at the same time he acknowledged the sanctity of the old institutions, which were upheld

by those whom he had learned to regard as the divinely-appointed guardians of the spiritual possessions of God's people; nor was he wholly free from the pride of caste and the haughtiness which, with prudent intent, were inculcated in the priests. He held the common man, who put forth his strength to win a maintenance for his belongings by honest bodily labor—the merchant—the artizan—the peasant, nay even the warrior, as far beneath the godly brotherhood who strove for only spiritual ends; and most of all he scorned the idler, given up to sensual enjoyments.

He held him unclean who had been branded by the law; and how should it have been otherwise?

These people, who at the embalming of the dead opened the body of the deceased, had become despised for their office of mutilating the sacred temple of the soul; but no paraschites chose his calling of his own free will.* It was handed down from father to son, and he who was born a paraschites—so he was taught—had to expiate an old guilt with which his soul had long ago burdened itself in a former existence, within another body, and which had deprived it of absolution in the nether world. It had passed through various animal forms, and now began a new human course in the body of a paraschites, once more to stand after death in the presence of the judges of the under-world.

Pentaur had crossed the threshold of the man he despised with aversion; the man himself, sitting at the feet of the suffering girl, had exclaimed as he saw the priest approaching the hovel:

"Yet another white robe! Does misfortune cleanse the unclean?"

* Diodorus I, 91.

Pentaur had not answered the old man, who on his part took no further notice of him, while he rubbed the girl's feet by order of the leech; and his hands impelled by tender anxiety untiringly continued the same movement, as the water-wheel in the Nile keeps up without intermission its steady motion in the stream.

"Does misfortune cleanse the unclean?" Pentaur asked himself. "Does it indeed possess a purifying efficacy, and is it possible that the Gods, who gave to fire the power of refining metals and to the winds power to sweep the clouds from the sky, should desire that a man—made in their own image—that a man should be tainted from his birth to his death with an indelible stain?"

He looked at the face of the paraschites, and it seemed to him to resemble that of his father.

This startled him!

And when he noticed how the woman, in whose lap the girl's head was resting, bent over the injured bosom of the child to catch her breathing, which she feared had come to a stand-still—with the anguish of a dove that is struck down by a hawk—he remembered a moment in his own childhood, when he had lain trembling with fever on his little bed. What then had happened to him, or had gone on around him, he had long forgotten, but one image was deeply imprinted on his soul, that of the face of his mother bending over him in deadly anguish, but who had gazed on her sick boy not more tenderly, or more anxiously, than this despised woman on her suffering child.

"There is only one utterly unselfish, utterly pure and utterly divine love," said he to himself, "and that is the love of Isis for Horus—the love of a mother for

her child. If these people were indeed so foul as to defile every thing they touch, how would this pure, this tender, holy impulse show itself even in them in all its beauty and perfection?"

"Still," he continued, "the Celestials have implanted maternal love in the breast of the lioness, of the typhonic river-horse of the Nile."

He looked compassionately at the wife of the paraschites.

He saw her dark face as she turned it away from the sick girl. She had felt her breathe, and a smile of happiness lighted up her old features; she nodded first to the surgeon, and then with a deep sigh of relief to her husband, who, while he did not cease the movement of his left hand, held up his right hand in prayer to heaven, and his wife did the same.

It seemed to Pentaur that he could see the souls of these two, floating above the youthful creature in holy union as they joined their hands; and again he thought of his parents' house, of the hour when his sweet, only sister died. His mother had thrown herself weeping on the pale form, but his father had stamped his foot and had thrown back his head, sobbing and striking his forehead with his fist.

"How piously submissive and thankful are these unclean ones!" thought Pentaur; and repugnance for the old laws began to take root in his heart. "Maternal love may exist in the hyæna, but to seek and find God pertains only to man, who has a noble aim. Up to the limits of eternity—and God is eternal!—thought is denied to animals; they cannot even smile. Even men cannot smile at first, for only physical life—an animal soul—dwells in them; but soon a share of the world's

soul—beaming intelligence—works within them, and first shows itself in the smile of a child, which is as pure as the light and the truth from which it comes. The child of the paraschites smiles like any other creature born of woman, but how few aged men there are, even among the initiated, who can smile as innocently and brightly as this woman who has grown grey under open ill-treatment."

Deep sympathy began to fill his heart, and he knelt down by the side of the poor child, raised her arm, and prayed fervently to that One who had created the heavens and who rules the world—to that One, whom the mysteries of faith forbade him to name; and not to the innumerable gods, whom the people worshipped, and who to him were nothing but incarnations of the attributes of the One and only God of the initiated—of whom he was one—who was thus brought down to the comprehension of the laity.

He raised his soul to God in passionate emotion; but he prayed, not for the child before him and for her recovery, but rather for the whole despised race, and for its release from the old ban, for the enlightenment of his own soul, imprisoned in doubts, and for strength to fulfil his hard task with discretion.

The gaze of the sufferer followed him as he took up his former position.

The prayer had refreshed his soul and restored him to cheerfulness of spirit. He began to reflect what conduct he must observe towards the princess.

He had not met Bent-Anat for the first time yesterday; on the contrary, he had frequently seen her in holiday processions, and at the high festivals in the

Necropolis, and like all his young companions had admired her proud beauty—admired it as the distant light of the stars, or the evening-glow on the horizon.

Now he must approach this lady with words of reproof.

He pictured to himself the moment when he must advance to meet her, and could not help thinking of his little tutor Chufu, above whom he towered by two heads while he was still a boy, and who used to call up his admonitions to him from below. It was true, he himself was tall and slim, but he felt as if to-day he were to play the part towards Bent-Anat of the much-laughed-at little tutor.

His sense of the comic was touched, and asserted itself at this serious moment, and with such melancholy surroundings. Life is rich in contrasts, and a susceptible and highly-strung human soul would break down like a bridge under the measured tread of soldiers, if it were allowed to let the burden of the heaviest thoughts and strongest feelings work upon it in undisturbed monotony; but just as in music every key-note has its harmonies, so when we cause one chord of our heart to vibrate for long, all sorts of strange notes respond and clang, often those which we least expect.

Pentaur's glance flew round the one low, over-filled room of the paraschites' hut, and like a lightning flash the thought, "How will the princess and her train find room here?" flew through his mind.

His fancy was lively, and vividly brought before him how the daughter of the Pharaoh with a crown on her proud head would bustle into the silent chamber, how the chattering courtiers would follow her, and how the women by the walls, the physicians by the side of

the sick girl, the sleek white cat from the chest where she sat, would rise and throng round her. There must be frightful confusion. Then he imagined how the smart lords and ladies would keep themselves far from the unclean, hold their slender hands over their mouths and noses, and suggest to the old folks how they ought to behave to the princess who condescended to bless them with her presence. The old woman must lay down the head that rested in her bosom, the paraschites must drop the feet he so anxiously rubbed, on the floor, to rise and kiss the dust before Bent-Anat. Whereupon—the "mind's eye" of the young priest seemed to see it all—the courtiers fled before him, pushing each other, and all crowded together into a corner, and at last the princess threw a few silver or gold rings into the laps of the father and mother, and perhaps to the girl too, and he seemed to hear the courtiers all cry out: "Hail to the gracious daughter of the Sun!"—to hear the joyful exclamations of the crowd of women—to see the gorgeous apparition leave the hut of the despised people, and then to see, instead of the lovely sick child who still breathed audibly, a silent corpse on the crumpled mat, and in the place of the two tender nurses at her head and feet, two heart-broken, loud-lamenting wretches.

Pentaur's hot spirit was full of wrath. As soon as the noisy cortège appeared actually in sight he would place himself in the doorway, forbid the princess to enter, and receive her with strong words.

She could hardly come hither out of human kindness.

"She wants variety," said he to himself, "something new at Court; for there is little going on there now

the king tarries with the troops in a distant country; it tickles the vanity of the great to find themselves once in a while in contact with the small, and it is well to have your goodness of heart spoken of by the people. If a little misfortune opportunely happens, it is not worth the trouble to inquire whether the form of our benevolence does more good or mischief to such wretched people."

He ground his teeth angrily, and thought no more of the defilement which might threaten Bent-Anat from the paraschites, but exclusively, on the contrary, of the impending desecration by the princess of the holy feelings astir in this silent room.

Excited as he was to fanaticism, his condemning lips could not fail to find vigorous and impressive words.

He stood drawn to his full height and drawing his breath deeply, like a spirit of light who holds his weapon raised to annihilate a demon of darkness, and he looked out into the valley to perceive from afar the cry of the runners and the rattle of the wheels of the gay train he expected.

And he saw the doorway darkened by a lowly, bending figure, who, with folded arms, glided into the room and sank down silently by the side of the sick girl. The physicians and the old people moved as if to rise; but she signed to them without opening her lips, and with moist, expressive eyes, to keep their places; she looked long and lovingly in the face of the wounded girl, stroked her white arm, and turning to the old woman softly whispered to her—

"How pretty she is!"

The paraschites' wife nodded assent, and the girl

smiled and moved her lips as though she had caught the words and wished to speak.

Bent-Anat took a rose from her hair and laid it on her bosom.

The paraschites, who had not taken his hands from the feet of the sick child, but who had followed every movement of the princess, now whispered, "May Hathor requite thee, who gave thee thy beauty."

The princess turned to him and said, "Forgive the sorrow, I have caused you."

The old man stood up, letting the feet of the sick girl fall, and asked in a clear loud voice—

"Art thou Bent-Anat?"

"Yes, I am," replied the princess, bowing her head low, and in so gentle a voice, that it seemed as though she were ashamed of her proud name.

The eyes of the old man flashed. Then he said softly but decisively—

"Leave my hut then, it will defile thee."

"Not till you have forgiven me for that which I did unintentionally."

"Unintentionally! I believe thee," replied the paraschites. "The hoofs of thy horse became unclean when they trod on this white breast. Look here—" and he lifted the cloth from the girl's bosom, and showed her the deep red wound, "Look here—here is the first rose you laid on my grandchild's bosom, and the second—there it goes."

The paraschites raised his arm to fling the flower through the door of his hut. But Pentaur had approached him, and with a grasp of iron held the old man's hand.

"Stay," he cried in an eager tone, moderated how-

ever for the sake of the sick girl. "The third rose, which this noble hand has offered you, your sick heart and silly head have not even perceived. And yet you must know it if only from your need, your longing for it. The fair blossom of pure benevolence is laid on your child's heart, and at your very feet, by this proud princess. Not with gold, but with humility. And whoever the daughter of Rameses approaches as her equal, bows before her, even if he were the first prince in the Land of Egypt. Indeed, the Gods shall not forget this deed of Bent-Anat. And you—forgive, if you desire to be forgiven that guilt, which you bear as an inheritance from your fathers, and for your own sins."

The paraschites bowed his head at these words, and when he raised it the anger had vanished from his well-cut features. He rubbed his wrist, which had been squeezed by Pentaur's iron fingers, and said in a tone which betrayed all the bitterness of his feelings:

"Thy hand is hard, Priest, and thy words hit like the strokes of a hammer. This fair lady is good and loving, and I know that she did not drive her horse intentionally over this poor girl, who is my grandchild and not my daughter. If she were thy wife or the wife of the leech there, or the child of the poor woman yonder, who supports life by collecting the feet and feathers of the fowls that are slaughtered for sacrifice, I would not only forgive her, but console her for having made herself like to me; fate would have made her a murderess without any fault of her own, just as it stamped me as unclean while I was still at my mother's breast. Aye —I would comfort her; and yet I am not very sensitive. Ye holy three of Thebes!* how should I be? Great and

* The triad of Thebes: Amon, Muth and Chunsu.

small get out of my way that I may not touch them, and every day when I have done what it is my business to do they throw stones at me.* The fulfilment of duty—which brings a living to other men, which makes their happiness, and at the same time earns them honor, brings me every day fresh disgrace and painful sores. But I complain to no man, and must forgive—forgive—forgive, till at last all that men do to me seems quite natural and unavoidable, and I take it all like the scorching of the sun in summer, and the dust that the west wind blows into my face. It does not make me happy, but what can I do? I forgive all—"

The voice of the paraschites had softened, and Bent-Anat, who looked down on him with emotion, interrupted him, exclaiming with deep feeling:

"And so you will forgive me?—poor man!"

The old man looked steadily, not at her, but at Pentaur, while he replied: "Poor man! aye, truly, poor man. You have driven me out of the world in which you live, and so I made a world for myself in this hut. I do not belong to you, and if I forget it, you drive me out as an intruder—nay as a wolf, who breaks into your fold; but you belong just as little to me, only when you play the wolf and fall upon me, I must bear it!"

"The princess came to your hut as a suppliant, and with the wish of doing you some good," said Pentaur.

"May the avenging Gods reckon it to her, when they visit on her the crimes of her father against me! Perhaps it may bring me to prison, but it must come out. Seven sons were mine, and Rameses took them all from me

* The paraschites, with an Ethiopian knife, cuts the flesh of the corpse as deeply as the law requires; but instantly takes to flight, while the relatives of the deceased pursue him with stones and curses, as if they wished to throw the blame on him.

and sent them to death; the child of the youngest, this girl, the light of my eyes, his daughter has brought to her death. Three of my boys the king left to die of thirst by the Tenat,* which is to join the Nile to the Red Sea, three were killed by the Ethiopians, and the last, the star of my hopes, by this time is eaten by the hyænas of the north."

At these words the old woman, in whose lap the head of the girl rested, broke out into a loud cry, in which she was joined by all the other women.

The sufferer started up frightened, and opened her eyes.

"For whom are you wailing?" she asked feebly.

"For your poor father," said the old woman.

The girl smiled like a child who detects some well-meant deceit, and said:

"Was not my father here, with you? He is here, in Thebes, and looked at me, and kissed me, and said that he is bringing home plunder, and that a good time is coming for you. The gold ring that he gave me I was fastening into my dress, when the chariot passed over me. I was just pulling the knots, when all grew black before my eyes, and I saw and heard nothing more. Undo it, grandmother, the ring is for you; I meant to bring it to you. You must buy a beast for sacrifice with it, and wine for grandfather, and eye-salve** for yourself, and sticks of mastic,*** which you have so long had to do without."

* Literally the 'cutting" which, under Seti I., the father of Rameses, was the first "Suez Canal;" a representation of it is found on the northern outer wall of the temple of Karnak. It followed nearly the same direction as the Fresh-water canal of Lesseps, and fertilized the land of Goshen.

** The Egyptian mestem, that is stibium or antimony, which was introduced into Egypt by the Asiatics at a very early period and universally used.

*** At the present day the Egyptian women are fond of chewing them, on account of their pleasant taste. The ancient Egyptians used various pills. Receipts for such things are found in the Ebers Papyrus.

The paraschites seemed to drink these words from the mouth of his grandchild. Again he lifted his hand in prayer, again Pentaur observed that his glance met that of his wife, and a large, warm tear fell from his old eyes on to his callous hand. Then he sank down, for he thought the sick child was deluded by a dream. But there were the knots in her dress.

With a trembling hand he untied them, and a gold ring rolled out on the floor.

Bent-Anat picked it up, and gave it to the paraschites.

"I came here in a lucky hour," she said, "for you have recovered your son and your child will live."

"She will live," repeated the surgeon, who had remained a silent witness of all that had occurred.

"She will stay with us," murmured the old man, and then said, as he approached the princess on his knees, and looked up at her beseechingly with tearful eyes:

"Pardon me as I pardon thee; and if a pious wish may not turn to a curse from the lips of the unclean, let me bless thee."

"I thank you," said Bent-Anat, towards whom the old man raised his hand in blessing.

Then she turned to Nebsecht, and ordered him to take anxious care of the sick girl; she bent over her, kissed her forehead, laid her gold bracelet by her side, and signing to Pentaur left the hut with him.

CHAPTER VI.

During the occurrence we have described, the king's pioneer and the young wife of Mena were obliged to wait for the princess.

The sun stood in the meridian, when Bent-Anat had gone into the hovel of the paraschites.

The bare limestone rocks on each side of the valley and the sandy soil between, shone with a vivid whiteness that hurt the eyes; not a hand's breadth of shade was anywhere to be seen, and the fan-bearers of the two, who were waiting there, had, by command of the princess, staid behind with the chariot and litters.

For a time they stood silently near each other, then the fair Nefert said, wearily closing her almond-shaped eyes:

"How long Bent-Anat stays in the hut of the unclean! I am perishing here. What shall we do?"

"Stay!" said Paaker, turning his back on the lady; and mounting a block of stone by the side of the gorge, he cast a practised glance all round, and returned to Nefert: "I have found a shady spot," he said, "out there."

Mena's wife followed with her eyes the indication of his hand, and shook her head. The gold ornaments on her head-dress rattled gently as she did so, and a cold shiver passed over her slim body in spite of the mid-day heat.

"Sechet* is raging in the sky," said Paaker. "Let us avail ourselves of the shady spot, small though it be. At this hour of the day many are struck with sickness."

"I know it," said Nefert, covering her neck with her hand. Then she went towards two blocks of stone which leaned against each other, and between them

* A goddess with the head of a lioness or a cat, over which the Sun-disk is usually found. She was the daughter of Ra, and in the form of the Uræus on her father's crown personified the murderous heat of the star of day. She incites man to the hot and wild passion of love, and as a cat or lioness tears burning wounds in the limbs of the guilty in the nether world; drunkenness and pleasure are her gifts. She was also named Bast and Astarte after her sister-divinity among the Phœnicians.

afforded the spot of shade, not many feet wide, which Paaker had pointed out as a shelter from the sun.

Paaker preceded her, and rolled a flat piece of limestone, inlaid by nature with nodules of flint, under the stone pavilion, crushed a few scorpions which had taken refuge there, spread his head-cloth over the hard seat, and said, "Here you are sheltered."

Nefert sank down on the stone and watched the Mohar, who slowly and silently paced backwards and forward in front of her. This incessant to and fro of her companion at last became unendurable to her sensitive and irritated nerves, and suddenly raising her head from her hand, on which she had rested it, she exclaimed—

"Pray stand still."

The pioneer obeyed instantly, and looked, as he stood with his back to her, towards the hovel of the paraschites.

After a short time Nefert said—

"Say something to me!"

The Mohar turned his full face towards her, and she was frightened at the wild fire that glowed in the glance with which he gazed at her.

Nefert's eyes fell, and Paaker, saying:

"I would rather remain silent," recommenced his walk, till Nefert called to him again and said,—

"I know you are angry with me; but I was but a child when I was betrothed to you. I liked you too, and when in our games your mother called me your little wife, I was really glad, and used to think how fine it would be when I might call all your possessions mine, the house you would have so splendidly restored for me after your father's death, the noble gardens, the

fine horses in their stables, and all the male and female slaves!"

Paaker laughed, but the laugh sounded so forced and scornful that it cut Nefert to the heart, and she went on, as if begging for indulgence:

"It was said that you were angry with us; and now you will take my words as if I had cared only for your wealth; but I said, I liked you. Do you no longer remember how I cried with you over your tales of the bad boys in the school, and over your father's severity? Then my uncle died;—then you went to Asia."

"And you," interrupted Paaker, hardly and drily, "you broke your bethrothal vows, and became the wife of the charioteer Mena. I know it all; of what use is talking?"

"Because it grieves me that you should be angry, and your good mother avoid our house. If only you could know what it is when love seizes one, and one can no longer even think alone, but only near, and with, and in the very arms of another; when one's beating heart throbs in one's very temples, and even in one's dreams one sees nothing—but one only."

"And do I not know it?" cried Paaker, placing himself close before her with his arms crossed. "Do I not know it? and you it was who taught me to know it. When I thought of you, not blood, but burning fire, coursed in my veins, and now you have filled them with poison; and here in this breast, in which your image dwelt, as lovely as that of Hathor in her holy of holies, all is like that sea in Syria which is called the Dead Sea, in which every thing that tries to live presently dies and perishes."

Paaker's eyes rolled as he spoke, and his voice sounded hoarsely as he went on.

"But Mena was near to the king—nearer than I, and your mother—"

"My mother!"—Nefert interrupted the angry Mohar. "My mother did not choose my husband. I saw him driving the chariot, and to me he resembled the Sun God, and he observed me, and looked at me, and his glance pierced deep into my heart like a spear; and when, at the festival of the king's birthday, he spoke to me, it was just as if Hathor had thrown round me a web of sweet, sounding sunbeams. And it was the same with Mena; he himself has told me so since I have been his wife. For your sake my mother rejected his suit, but I grew pale and dull with longing for him, and he lost his bright spirit, and was so melancholy that the king remarked it, and asked what weighed on his heart—for Rameses loves him as his own son. Then Mena confessed to the Pharaoh that it was love that dimmed his eye and weakened his strong hand; and then the king himself courted me for his faithful servant, and my mother gave way, and we were made man and wife, and all the joys of the justified in the fields of Aalu* are shallow and feeble by the side of the bliss which we two have known—not like mortal men, but like the celestial gods."

Up to this point Nefert had fixed her large eyes on the sky, like a glorified soul; but now her gaze fell, and she said softly—

* The fields of the blest, which were opened to glorified souls. In the Book of the Dead it is shown that in them men linger, and sow and reap by cool waters.

"But the Cheta* disturbed our happiness, for the king took Mena with him to the war. Fifteen times did the moon rise upon our happiness, and then—"

"And then the Gods heard my prayer, and accepted my offerings," said Paaker, with a trembling voice, "and tore the robber of my joys from you, and scorched your heart and his with desire. Do you think you can tell me anything I do not know? Once again for fifteen days was Mena yours, and now he has not returned again from the war which is raging hotly in Asia."

"But he will return," cried the young wife.

"Or possibly not," laughed Paaker. "The Cheta, carry sharp weapons, and there are many vultures in Lebanon, who perhaps at this hour are tearing his flesh as he tore my heart."

Nefert rose at these words, her sensitive spirit bruised as with stones thrown by a brutal hand, and attempted to leave her shady refuge to follow the princess into the house of the paraschites; but her feet refused to bear her, and she sank back trembling on her stone seat. She tried to find words, but her tongue was powerless. Her powers of resistance forsook her in her unutterable and soul-felt distress—heart-wrung, forsaken and provoked.

A variety of painful sensations raised a hot vehement storm in her bosom, which checked her breath, and at last found relief in a passionate and convulsive weeping that shook her whole body. She saw nothing more, she heard nothing more, she only shed tears and felt herself miserable.

* An Aramæan race, according to Schrader's excellent judgment. At the time of our story the peoples of western Asia had allied themselves to them.

Paaker stood over her in silence.

There are trees in the tropics, on which white blossoms hang close by the withered fruit, there are days when the pale moon shows itself near the clear bright sun;—and it is given to the soul of man to feel love and hatred, both at the same time, and to direct both to the same end.

Nefert's tears fell as dew, her sobs as manna on the soul of Paaker, which hungered and thirsted for revenge. Her pain was joy to him, and yet the sight of her beauty filled him with passion, his gaze lingered spell-bound on her graceful form; he would have given all the bliss of heaven once, only once, to hold her in his arms—once, only once, to hear a word of love from her lips.

After some minutes Nefert's tears grew less violent. With a weary, almost indifferent gaze she looked at the Mohar, still standing before her, and said in a soft tone of entreaty:

"My tongue is parched, fetch me a little water."

"The princess may come out at any moment," replied Paaker.

"But I am fainting," said Nefert, and began again to cry gently.

Paaker shrugged his shoulders, and went farther into the valley, which he knew as well as his father's house; for in it was the tomb of his mother's ancestors, in which, as a boy, he had put up prayers at every full and new moon, and laid gifts on the altar.

The hut of the paraschites was prohibited to him, but he knew that scarcely a hundred paces from the spot where Nefert was sitting, lived an old woman of

evil repute, in whose hole in the rock he could not fail to find a drink of water.

He hastened forward, half intoxicated with all he had seen and felt within the last few minutes.

The door, which at night closed the cave against the intrusions of the plunder-seeking jackals, was wide open, and the old woman sat outside under a ragged piece of brown sail-cloth, fastened at one end to the rock and at the other to two posts of rough wood. She was sorting a heap of dark and light-colored roots, which lay in her lap. Near her was a wheel, which turned in a high wooden fork. A wryneck made fast to it by a little chain, and by springing from spoke to spoke kept it in continual motion.* A large black cat crouched beside her, and smelt at some ravens' and owls' heads, from which the eyes had not long since been extracted.

Two sparrow-hawks sat huddled up over the door of the cave, out of which came the sharp odor of burning juniper-berries; this was intended to render the various emanations rising from the different strange substances, which were collected and preserved there, innocuous.

As Paaker approached the cavern the old woman called out to some one within:

"Is the wax cooking?"

An unintelligible murmur was heard in answer.

"Then throw in the ape's eyes,** and the ibis-feathers, and the scraps of linen with the black signs on them. Stir it all a little; now put out the fire.

* From Theocritus' idyl: The Sorceress.

** The sentences and mediums employed by the witches, according to papyrus-rolls which remain. I have availed myself of the Magic papyrus of Harris, and of two in the Berlin collection, one of which is in Greek.

Take the jug and fetch some water—make haste, here comes a stranger."

A sooty-black negro woman, with a piece of torn colorless stuff hanging round her hips, set a large clay-jar on her grey woolly matted hair, and without looking at him, went past Paaker, who was now close to the cave.

The old woman, a tall figure bent with years, with a sharply-cut and wrinkled face, that might once have been handsome, made her preparations for receiving the visitor by tying a gaudy kerchief over her head, fastening her blue cotton garment round her throat, and flinging a fibre mat over the birds' heads.

Paaker called out to her, but she feigned to be deaf and not to hear his voice. Only when he stood quite close to her, did she raise her shrewd, twinkling eyes, and cry out:

"A lucky day! a white day that brings a noble guest and high honor."

"Get up," commanded Paaker, not giving her any greeting, but throwing a silver ring* among the roots that lay in her lap, "and give me in exchange for good money some water in a clean vessel."

"Fine pure silver," said the old woman, while she held the ring, which she had quickly picked out from the roots, close to her eyes; "it is too much for mere water, and too little for my good liquors."

"Don't chatter, hussy, but make haste," cried Paaker, taking another ring from his money-bag and throwing it into her lap.

"Thou hast an open hand," said the old woman,

* The Egyptians had no coins before Alexander and the Ptolemies, but used metals for exchange, usually in the form of rings.

speaking in the dialect of the upper classes; "many doors must be open to thee, for money is a pass-key that turns any lock. Would'st thou have water for thy good money? Shall it protect thee against noxious beasts?—shall it help thee to reach down a star? Shall it guide thee to secret paths?—It is thy duty to lead the way. Shall it make heat cold, or cold warm? Shall it give thee the power of reading hearts, or shall it beget beautiful dreams? Wilt thou drink of the water of knowledge and see whether thy friend or thine enemy—ha! if thine enemy shall die? Would'st thou a drink to strengthen thy memory? Shall the water make thee invisible? or remove the sixth toe from thy left foot?"

"You know me?" asked Paaker.

"How should I?" said the old woman, "but my eyes are sharp, and I can prepare good waters for great and small."

"Mere babble!" exclaimed Paaker, impatiently clutching at the whip in his girdle; "make haste, for the lady for whom—"

"Dost thou want the water for a lady?" interrupted the old woman. "Who would have thought it?—old men certainly ask for my philters much oftener than young ones,—but I can serve thee."

With these words the old woman went into the cave, and soon returned with a thin cylindrical flask of alabaster in her hand.

"This is the drink," she said, giving the phial to Paaker. "Pour half into water, and offer it to the lady. If it does not succeed at first, it is certain the second time. A child may drink the water and it will not hurt him, or if an old man takes it, it makes him

gay. Ah, I know the taste of it!" and she moistened her lips with the white fluid. "It can hurt no one, but I will take no more of it, or old Hekt will be tormented with love and longing for thee; and that would ill please the rich young lord, ha! ha! If the drink is in vain I am paid enough, if it takes effect thou shalt bring me three more gold rings; and thou wilt return, I know it well."

Paaker had listened motionless to the old woman, and siezed the flask eagerly, as if bidding defiance to some adversary; he put it in his money bag, threw a few more rings at the feet of the witch, and once more hastily demanded a bowl of Nile-water.

"Is my lord in such a hurry?" muttered the old woman, once more going into the cave. "He asks if I know him? him certainly I do? but the darling? who can it be hereabouts? perhaps little Uarda at the paraschites yonder. She is pretty enough; but she is lying on a mat, run over and dying. We must see what my lord means, He would have pleased me well enough, if I were young; but he will reach the goal, for he is resolute and spares no one."

While she muttered these and similar words, she filled a graceful cup of glazed earthenware with filtered Nile-water, which she poured out of a large porous clay jar, and laid a laurel leaf, on which was scratched two hearts linked together by seven strokes, on the surface of the limpid fluid. Then she stepped out into the air again.

As Paaker took the vessel from her hand, and looked at the laurel leaf, she said:

"This indeed binds hearts; three is the husband,

four is the wife, seven is the indivisible. Chaach, chachach, charcharachacha."*

The old woman sang this spell not without skill; but the Mohar appeared not to listen to her jargon. He descended carefully into the valley, and directed his steps to the resting place of the wife of Mena.

By the side of a rock, which hid him from Nefert, he paused, set the cup on a flat block of stone, and drew the flask with the philter out of his girdle.

His fingers trembled, but a thousand voices within seemed to surge up and cry—

"Take it!—do it!—put in the drink!—now or never."

He felt like a solitary traveller, who finds on his road the last will of a relation whose possessions he had hoped for, but which disinherits him. Shall he surrender it to the judge, or shall he destroy it.

Paaker was not merely outwardly devout; hitherto he had in everything intended to act according to the prescriptions of the religion of his fathers. Adultery was a heavy sin;—but had not he an older right to Nefert than the king's charioteer?

He who followed the black arts of magic, should, according to the law, be punished by death,** and the old woman had a bad name for her evil arts; but he had not sought her for the sake of the philter. Was it not possible that the Manes of his forefathers, that the Gods themselves, moved by his prayers and offerings, had put him in possession by an accident—which was almost a miracle—of the magic potion whose efficacy he never for an instant doubted?

* This jargon is found in a magic-papyrus at Berlin.

** From the papyri Lee and Rollin. See also Birch *Sur un papyrus magique.* Revue archéologique, 1863. Chabas, Harris magic-papyrus. Deveria. Papyr, judiciaire de Turin.

Paaker's associates held him to be a man of quick decision, and, in fact, in difficult cases he could act with unusual rapidity, but what guided him in these cases, was not the swift-winged judgment of a prepared and well-schooled brain, but usually only resulted from the outcome of a play of question and answer.

Amulets of the most various kinds hung round his neck, and from his girdle, all consecrated by priests, and of special sanctity or the highest efficacy.

There was the lapis lazuli eye, which hung to his girdle by a gold chain; when he threw it on the ground, so as to lie on the earth, if its engraved side turned to heaven, and its smooth side lay on the ground, he said "yes;" in the other case, on the contrary, "no." In his purse lay always a statuette of the god Apheru,* who opened roads; this he threw down at cross-roads, and followed the direction which the pointed snout of the image indicated. He frequently called into council the seal-ring of his deceased father, an old family possession, which the chief priests of Abydos had laid upon the holiest of the fourteen graves of Osiris, and endowed with miraculous power.** It consisted of a gold ring with a broad signet, on which could be read the name of Thotmes III., who had long since been deified, and from whom Paaker's ancestors had derived it. If it were desirable to consult the ring, the Mohar touched with the point of his bronze dagger the engraved sign of the name,

* A particular form of Anubis—as was the jackal-headed local divinity of Lykopolis, the modern Sint.

** Typhon cut the body of Osiris into fourteen pieces, and then strewed them in Egypt. When Isis found one of them she erected a monument to her husband. In later times none of these was reckoned more holy than that of Abydos, whither also Egyptians of rank had their mummies conveyed to rest in the vicinity of Osiris.

below which were represented three objects sacred to the Gods, and three that were, on the contrary, profane. If he hit one of the former, he concluded that his father—who was gone to Osiris—concurred in his design; in the contrary case he was careful to postpone it. Often he pressed the ring to his heart, and awaited the first living creature that he might meet, regarding it as a messenger from his father;—if it came to him from the right hand as an encouragement, if from the left as a warning.

By degrees he had reduced these questionings to a system. All that he found in nature he referred to himself and the current of his life. It was at once touching, and pitiful, to see how closely he lived with the Manes of his dead. His lively, but not exalted fancy, wherever he gave it play, presented to the eye of his soul the image of his father and of an elder brother who had died early, always in the same spot, and almost tangibly distinct.

But he never conjured up the remembrance of the beloved dead in order to think of them in silent melancholy—that sweet blossom of the thorny wreath of sorrow; only for selfish ends. The appeal to the Manes of his father he had found especially efficacious in certain desires and difficulties; calling on the Manes of his brother was potent in certain others; and so he turned from one to the other with the precision of a carpenter, who rarely doubts whether he should give the preference to a hatchet or a saw.

These doings he held to be well pleasing to the Gods, and as he was convinced that the spirits of his dead had, after their justification, passed into Osiris—that is to say, as atoms forming part of the great

world-soul, at this time had a share in the direction of the universe—he sacrificed to them not only in the family catacomb, but also in the temples of the Necropolis dedicated to the worship of ancestors, and with special preference in the House of Seti.

He accepted advice, nay even blame, from Ameni and the other priests under his direction; and so lived full of a virtuous pride in being one of the most zealous devotees in the land, and one of the most pleasing to the Gods, a belief on which his pastors never threw any doubt.

Attended and guided at every step by supernatural powers, he wanted no friend and no confidant. In the field, as in Thebes, he stood apart, and passed among his comrades for a reserved man, rough and proud, but with a strong will.

He had the power of calling up the image of his lost love with as much vividness as the forms of the dead, and indulged in this magic, not only through a hundred still nights, but in long rides and drives through silent wastes.

Such visions were commonly followed by a vehement and boiling overflow of his hatred against the charioteer, and a whole series of fervent prayers for his destruction.

When Paaker set the cup of water for Nefert on the flat stone and felt for the philter, his soul was so full of desire that there was no room for hatred; still he could not altogether exclude the idea that he would commit a great crime by making use of a magic drink. Before pouring the fateful drops into the water, he would consult the oracle of the ring. The dagger touched none of the holy symbols of the

inscription on the signet, and in other circumstances he would, without going any farther, have given up his project.

But this time he unwillingly returned it to its sheath, pressed the gold ring to his heart, muttered the name of his brother in Osiris, and awaited the first living creature that might come towards him.

He had not long to wait; from the mountain slope opposite to him rose, with heavy, slow wing-strokes, two light-colored vultures.

In anxious suspense he followed their flight, as they rose, higher and higher. For a moment they poised motionless, borne up by the air, circled round each other, then wheeled to the left and vanished behind the mountains, denying him the fulfilment of his desire.

He hastily grasped the phial to fling it from him, but the surging passion in his veins had deprived him of his self-control. Nefert's image stood before him as if beckoning him; a mysterious power clenched his fingers close and yet closer round the phial, and with the same defiance which he showed to his associates, he poured half of the philter into the cup and approached his victim.

Nefert had meanwhile left her shady retreat and come towards him.

She silently accepted the water he offered her, and drank it with delight, to the very dregs.

"Thank you," she said, when she had recovered breath after her eager draught.

"That has done me good! How fresh and acid the water tastes; but your hand shakes, and you are heated by your quick run for me—poor man."

With these words she looked at him with a peculiar expressive glance of her large eyes, and gave him her right hand, which he pressed wildly to his lips.

"That will do," she said smiling; "here comes the princess with a priest, out of the hovel of the unclean. With what frightful words you terrified me just now. It is true I gave you just cause to be angry with me; but now you are kind again—do you hear?—and will bring your mother again to see mine. Not a word. I shall see, whether cousin Paaker refuses me obedience."

"She threatened him playfully with her finger, and then growing grave she added, with a look that pierced Paaker's heart with pain, and yet with ecstasy, "Let us leave off quarrelling. It is so much better when people are kind to each other."

After these words she walked towards the house of the paraschites, while Paaker pressed his hands to his breast, and murmured:

"The drink is working, and she will be mine. I thank ye—ye Immortals!"

But this thanksgiving, which hitherto he had never failed to utter when any good fortune had befallen him, to-day died on his lips. Close before him he saw the goal of his desires; there, under his eyes, lay the magic spring longed for for years. A few steps farther, and he might slake at its copious stream his thirst both for love and for revenge.

While he followed the wife of Mena, and replaced the phial carefully in his girdle, so as to lose no drop of the precious fluid which, according to the prescription of the old woman, he needed to use again, warning voices spoke in his breast, to which he usually listened

as to a fatherly admonition; but at this moment he mocked at them, and even gave outward expression to the mood that ruled him—for he flung up his right hand like a drunken man, who turns away from the preacher of morality on his way to the wine-cask; and yet passion held him so closely ensnared, that the thought that he should live through the swift moments which would change him from an honest man into a criminal, hardly dawned, darkly on his soul. He had hitherto dared to indulge his desire for love and revenge in thought only, and had left it to the Gods to act for themselves; now he had taken his cause out of the hand of the Celestials, and gone into action without them, and in spite of them.

The sorceress Hekt passed him; she wanted to see the woman for whom she had given him the philter. He perceived her and shuddered, but soon the old woman vanished among the rocks muttering.

"Look at the fellow with six toes. He makes himself comfortable with the heritage of Assa."

In the middle of the valley walked Nefert and the pioneer, with the princess Bent-Anat and Pentaur who accompanied her.

When these two had come out of the hut of the paraschites, they stood opposite each other in silence.

The royal maiden pressed her hand to her heart, and, like one who is thirsty, drank in the pure air of the mountain valley with deeply drawn breath; she felt as if released from some overwhelming burden, as if delivered from some frightful danger.

At last she turned to her companion, who gazed earnestly at the ground.

"What an hour!" she said.

Pentaur's tall figure did not move, but he bowed his head in assent, as if he were in a dream.

Bent-Anat now saw him for the first time in full daylight; her large eyes rested on him with admiration, and she asked:

"Art thou the priest, who yesterday, after my first visit to this house, so readily restored me to cleanness?"

"I am he," replied Pentaur.

"I recognized thy voice, and I am grateful to thee, for it was thou that didst strengthen my courage to follow the impulse of my heart, in spite of my spiritual guides, and to come here again. Thou wilt defend me if others blame me."

"I came here to pronounce thee unclean."

"Then thou hast changed thy mind?" asked Bent-Anat, and a smile of contempt curled her lips.

"I follow a high injunction, that commands us to keep the old institutions sacred. If touching a paraschites, it is said, does not defile a princess, whom then can it defile? for whose garment is more spotless than hers?"

"But this is a good man with all his meanness," interrupted Bent-Anat, "and in spite of the disgrace, which is the bread of life to him as honor is to us. May the nine great Gods forgive me! but he who is in there is loving, pious and brave, and pleases me—and thou, thou, who didst think yesterday to purge away the taint of his touch with a word—what prompts thee today to cast him with the lepers?"

"The admonition of an enlightened man, never to give up any link of the old institutions; because thereby the already weakened chain may be broken, and fall rattling to the ground.''

"Then thou condemnest me to uncleanness for the sake of an old superstition, and of the populace, but not for my actions? Thou art silent? Answer me now, if thou art such a one as I took thee for, freely and sincerely; for it concerns the peace of my soul."

Pentaur breathed hard; and then from the depths of his soul, tormented by doubts, these deeply-felt words forced themselves as if wrung from him; at first softly, but louder as he went on.

"Thou dost compel me to say what I had better not even think; but rather will I sin against obedience than against truth, the pure daughter of the Sun, whose aspect, Bent-Anat, thou dost wear. Whether the paraschites is unclean by birth or not, who am I that I should decide? But to me this man appeared—as to thee—as one moved by the same pure and holy emotions as stir and bless me and mine, and thee and every soul born of woman; and I believe that the impressions of this hour have touched thy soul as well as mine, not to taint, but to purify. If I am wrong, may the many-named Gods forgive me, Whose breath lives and works in the paraschites as well as in thee and me, in Whom I believe, and to Whom I will ever address my humble songs, louder and more joyfully, as I learn that all that lives and breathes, that weeps and rejoices, is the image of their sublime nature, and born to equal joy and equal sorrow."

Pentaur had raised his eyes to heaven; now they met the proud and joyful radiance of the princess' glance, while she frankly offered him her hand. He humbly kissed her robe, but she said:

"Nay—not so. Lay thy hand in blessing on mine. Thou art a man and a true priest. Now I can be satis-

fied to be regarded as unclean, for my father also desires that, by us especially, the institutions of the past that have so long continued should be respected, for the sake of the people. Let us pray in common to the Gods, that these poor people may be released from the old ban. How beautiful the world might be, if men would but let man remain what the Celestials have made him. But Paaker and poor Nefert are waiting in the scorching sun—come, follow me."

She went forward, but after a few steps she turned round to him, and asked:

"What is thy name?"

"Pentaur."

"Thou then art the poet of the House of Seti?"

"They call me so."

Bent-Anat stood still a moment, gazing full at him as at a kinsman whom we meet for the first time face to face, and said:

"The Gods have given thee great gifts, for thy glance reaches farther and pierces deeper than that of other men; and thou canst say in words what we can only feel—I follow thee willingly!"

Pentaur blushed like a boy, and said, while Paaker and Nefert came nearer to them:

"Till to-day life lay before me as if in twilight; but this moment shows it me in another light. I have seen its deepest shadows; and," he added in a low tone "how glorious its light can be."

CHAPTER VII.

An hour later, Bent-Anat and her train of followers stood before the gate of the House of Seti.

Swift as a ball thrown from a man's hand, a runner had sprung forward and hurried on to announce the approach of the princess to the chief priest. She stood alone in her chariot, in advance of all her companions, for Pentaur had found a place with Paaker. At the gate of the temple they were met by the head of the haruspices.

The great doors of the pylon were wide open, and afforded a view into the forecourt of the sanctuary, paved with polished squares of stone, and surrounded on three sides with colonnades. The walls and architraves, the pillars and the fluted cornice, which slightly curved in over the court, were gorgeous with many-colored figures and painted decorations. In the middle stood a great sacrificial altar, on which burned logs of cedar wood, whilst fragrant balls of Kyphi* were consumed by the flames, filling the wide space with their heavy perfume. Around, in semi-circular array, stood more than a hundred white-robed priests, who all turned to face the approaching princess, and sang heart-rending songs of lamentation.

Many of the inhabitants of the Necropolis had collected on either side of the lines of sphinxes, between which the princess drove up to the Sanctuary. But

* Kyphi was a celebrated Egyptian incense. Recipes for its preparation have been preserved in the papyrus of Ebers, in the laboratories of the temples, and elsewhere. Parthey had three different varieties prepared by the chemist, L. Voigt, in Berlin. Kyphi after the formula of Dioskorides was the best. It consisted of rosin, wine, rad, galangae, juniper berries, the root of the aromatic rush, asphalte, mastic, myrrh, Burgundy grapes, and honey.

none asked what these songs of lamentation might signify, for about this sacred place lamentation and mystery for ever lingered. "Hail to the child of Rameses!" "All hail to the daughter of the Sun!" rang from a thousand throats; and the assembled multitude bowed almost to the earth at the approach of the royal maiden.

At the pylon, the princess descended from her chariot, and preceded by the chief of the haruspices, who had gravely and silently greeted her, passed on to the door of the temple. But as she prepared to cross the forecourt, suddenly, without warning, the priests' chant swelled to a terrible, almost thundering loudness, the clear, shrill voice of the Temple scholars rising in passionate lament, supported by the deep and threatening roll of the basses.

Bent-Anat started and checked her steps. Then she walked on again.

But on the threshold of the door, Ameni, in full pontifical robes, stood before her in the way, his crozier extended as though to forbid her entrance.

"The advent of the daughter of Rameses in her purity," he cried in loud and passionate tones, "augurs blessing to this sanctuary; but this abode of the Gods closes its portals on the unclean, be they slaves or princes. In the name of the Immortals, from whom thou art descended, I ask thee, Bent-Anat, art thou clean, or hast thou, through the touch of the unclean, defiled thyself and contaminated thy royal hand?"

Deep scarlet flushed the maiden's cheeks, there was a rushing sound in her ears as of a stormy sea surging close beside her, and her bosom rose and fell in passionate emotion. The kingly blood in her veins boiled

wildly; she felt that an unworthy part had been assigned to her in a carefully-premeditated scene; she forgot her resolution to accuse herself of uncleanness, and already her lips were parted in vehement protest against the priestly assumption that so deeply stirred her to rebellion, when Ameni, who placed himself directly in front of the Princess, raised his eyes, and turned them full upon her with all the depths of their indwelling earnestness.

The words died away, and Bent-Anat stood silent, but she endured the gaze, and returned it proudly and defiantly.

The blue veins started in Ameni's forehead; yet he repressed the resentment which was gathering like thunder clouds in his soul, and said, with a voice that gradually deviated more and more from its usual moderation:

"For the second time the Gods demand through me, their representative: Hast thou entered this holy place in order that the Celestials may purge thee of the defilement that stains thy body and soul?"

"My father will communicate the answer to thee," replied Bent-Anat shortly and proudly.

"Not to me," returned Ameni, "but to the Gods, in whose name I now command thee to quit this sanctuary, which is defiled by thy presence."

Bent-Anat's whole form quivered. "I will go," she said with sullen dignity.

She turned to recross the gateway of the Pylon. At the first step her glance met the eye of the poet.

As one to whom it is vouchsafed to stand and gaze at some great prodigy, so Pentaur had stood opposite the royal maiden, uneasy and yet fascinated, agitated,

yet with secretly uplifted soul. Her deed seemed to him of boundless audacity, and yet one suited to her true and noble nature. By her side, Ameni, his revered and admired master, sank into insignificance; and when she turned to leave the temple, his hand was raised indeed to hold her back, but as his glance met hers, his hand refused its office, and sought instead to still the throbbing of his overflowing heart.

The experienced priest, meanwhile, read the features of these two guileless beings like an open book. A quickly-formed tie, he felt, linked their souls, and the look which he saw them exchange startled him. The rebellious princess had glanced at the poet as though claiming approbation for her triumph, and Pentaur's eyes had responded to the appeal.

One instant Ameni paused. Then he cried: "Bent-Anat!"

The princess turned to the priest, and looked at him gravely and enquiringly.

Ameni took a step forward, and stood between her and the poet.

"Thou wouldst challenge the Gods to combat," he said sternly. "That is bold; but such daring it seems to me has grown up in thee because thou canst count on an ally, who stands scarcely farther from the Immortals than I myself. Hear this:—to thee, the misguided child, much may be forgiven. But a servant of the Divinity," and with these words he turned a threatening glance on Pentaur—"a priest, who in the war of free-will against law becomes a deserter, who forgets his duty and his oath—he will not long stand beside thee to support thee, for he—even though every God

had blessed him with the richest gifts—he is damned. We drive him from among us, we curse him, we—"

At these words Bent-Anat looked now at Ameni, trembling with excitement, now at Pentaur standing opposite to her. Her face was red and white by turns, as light and shade chase each other on the ground when at noon-day a palm-grove is stirred by a storm.

The poet took a step towards her.

She felt that if he spoke it would be to defend all that she had done, and to ruin himself. A deep sympathy, a nameless anguish seized her soul, and before Pentaur could open his lips, she had sunk slowly down before Ameni, saying in low tones:

"I have sinned and defiled myself; thou hast said it—as Pentaur said it by the hut of the paraschites. Restore me to cleanness, Ameni, for I am unclean."

Like a flame that is crushed out by a hand, so the fire in the high-priest's eye was extinguished. Graciously, almost lovingly, he looked down on the princess, blessed her and conducted her before the holy of holies, there had clouds of incense wafted round her, anointed her with the nine holy oils, and commanded her to return to the royal castle.

Yet, said he, her guilt was not expiated; she should shortly learn by what prayers and exercises she might attain once more to perfect purity before the Gods, of whom he purposed to enquire in the holy place.

During all these ceremonies the priests stationed in the forecourt continued their lamentations.

The people standing before the temple listened to the priest's chant, and interrupted it from time to time with ringing cries of wailing, for already a dark rumor of

what was going on within had spread among the multitude.

The sun was going down. The visitors to the Necropolis must soon be leaving it, and Bent-Anat, for whose appearance the people impatiently waited, would not show herself. One and another said the princess had been cursed, because she had taken remedies to the fair and injured Uarda, who was known to many of them.

Among the curious who had flocked together were many embalmers, laborers, and humble folk, who lived in the Necropolis. The mutinous and refractory temper of the Egyptians, which brought such heavy suffering on them under their later foreign rulers, was aroused, and rising with every minute. They reviled the pride of the priests, and their senseless, worthless, institutions. A drunken soldier, who soon reeled back into the tavern which he had but just left, distinguished himself as ringleader, and was the first to pick up a heavy stone to fling at the huge brass-plated temple-gates. A few boys followed his example with shouts, and law-abiding men even, urged by the clamor of fanatical women, let themselves be led away to stone-flinging and words of abuse.

Within the House of Seti the priests' chant went on uninterruptedly; but at last, when the noise of the crowd grew louder, the great gate was thrown open, and with a solemn step Ameni, in full robes, and followed by twenty pastophori * who bore images of the Gods and holy symbols on their shoulders—Ameni walked into the midst of the crowd.

All were silent.

* An order of priests.

"Wherefore do you disturb our worship?" he asked loudly and calmly.

A roar of confused cries answered him, in which the frequently repeated name of Bent-Anat could alone be distinguished.

Ameni preserved his immoveable composure, and, raising his crozier, he cried—

"Make way for the daughter of Rameses, who sought and has found purification from the Gods, who behold the guilt of the highest as of the lowest among you. They reward the pious, but they punish the offender. Kneel down and let us pray that they may forgive you, and bless both you and your children."

Ameni took the holy Sistrum* from one of the attendant pastophori, and held it on high; the priests behind him raised a solemn hymn, and the crowd sank on their knees; nor did they move till the chant ceased and the high-priest again cried out:

"The Immortals bless you by me their servant. Leave this spot and make way for the daughter of Rameses."

With these words he withdrew into the temple, and the patrol, without meeting with any opposition, cleared the road guarded by Sphinxes which led to the Nile.

As Bent-Anat mounted her chariot Ameni said:

"Thou art the child of kings. The house of thy

* A rattling metal instrument used by the Egyptians in the service of the Gods. Many specimens are extant in Museums. Plutarch describes it correctly, thus: "The Sistrum is rounded above, and the loop holds the four bars which are shaken. On the bend of the Sistrum they often set the head of a cat with a human face: below the four little bars, on one side is the face of Isis, on the other that of Nephthys." The cat head is seen on a bronze Sistrum in the Berlin Museum; on other examples we find at the upper end of the handle the usual mask of Hathor. In the sanctuary of this Goddess at Dendera the image of the holy Sistrum was thrown into great prominence.

father rests on the shoulders of the people. Loosen the old laws which hold them subject, and the people will conduct themselves like these fools."

Ameni retired. Bent-Anat slowly arranged the reins in her hand, her eyes resting the while on the poet, who, leaning against a door-post, gazed at her in beatitude. She let her whip fall to the ground, that he might pick it up and restore it to her, but he did not observe it. A runner sprang forward and handed it to the princess, whose horses started off, tossing themselves and neighing.

Pentaur remained as if spell-bound, standing by the pillar, till the rattle of the departing wheels on the flag-way of the Avenue of Sphinxes had altogether died away, and the reflection of the glowing sunset painted the eastern hills with soft and rosy hues.

The far-sounding clang of a brass gong roused the poet from his ecstasy. It was the tomtom calling him to duty, to the lecture on rhetoric which at this hour he had to deliver to the young priests. He laid his left hand to his heart, and pressed his right hand to his forehead, as if to collect in its grasp his wandering thoughts; then silently and mechanically he went towards the open court in which his disciples awaited him. But instead of, as usual, considering on the way the subject he was to treat, his spirit and heart were occupied with the occurrences of the last few hours. One image reigned supreme in his imagination, filling it with delight—it was that of the fairest woman, who, radiant in her royal dignity and trembling with pride, had thrown herself in the dust for his sake. He felt as if her action had invested her whole being with a new and princely worth, as if her glance had brought light

to his inmost soul, he seemed to breathe a freer air, to be borne onward on winged feet.

In such a mood he appeared before his hearers.

When he found himself confronting all the the well-known faces, he remembered what it was he was called upon to do. He supported himself against the wall of the court, and opened the papyrus-roll handed to him by his favorite pupil, the young Anana. It was the book which twenty-four hours ago he had promised to begin upon. He looked now upon the characters that covered it, and felt that he was unable to read a word.

With a powerful effort he collected himself, and looking upwards tried to find the thread he had cut at the end of yesterday's lecture, and intended to resume to-day; but between yesterday and to-day, as it seemed to him, lay a vast sea whose roaring surges stunned his memory and powers of thought.

His scholars, squatting cross-legged on reed mats before him, gazed in astonishment on their silent master who was usually so ready of speech, and looked enquiringly at each other. A young priest whispered to his neighbor, "He is praying—" and Anana noticed with silent anxiety the strong hand of his teacher clutching the manuscript so tightly that the slight material of which it consisted threatened to split.

At last Pentaur looked down; he had found a subject. While he was looking upwards his gaze fell on the opposite wall, and the painted name of the king with the accompanying title "the good God" met his eye. Starting from these words he put this question

to his hearers, "How do we apprehend the Goodness of the Divinity?"

He challenged one priest after another to treat this subject as if he were standing before his future congregation.

Several disciples rose, and spoke with more or less truth and feeling. At last it came to Anana's turn, who, in well-chosen words, praised the purpose-full beauty of animate and inanimate creation, in which the goodness of Amon,* of Ra,** and Ptah,*** as well as of the other Gods, finds expression.

Pentaur listened to the youth with folded arms, now looking at him enquiringly, now adding approbation. Then taking up the thread of the discourse when it was ended, he began himself to speak.

Like obedient falcons at the call of the falconer,

* Amon, that is to say, "the hidden one." He was the God of Thebes, which was under his ægis, and after the Hyksos were expelled from the Nile-valley, he was united with Ra of Heliopolis and endowed with the attributes of all the remaining Gods. His nature was more and more spiritualized, till in the esoteric philosophy of the time of the Rameses he is compared to the All-filling and All-guiding intelligence. He is "the husband of his mother, his own father, and his own son," As the living Osiris, he is the soul and spirit of all creation, which first enters on a higher order of existence through him. He was "benevolent," "beautiful," "without equal," and also was called the "annihilator of evil"—by which man expressed his reverence for the hidden power which raises the good, and overthrows the wicked. He is recognized by the tall double plume on his crown. He was represented with a ram's head as Amon Chnem.

** Ra, originally the Sun-God; later his name was introduced into the pantheistic mystic philosophy for that of the God who is the Universe.

*** Ptah is the Greek Hephaistos, the oldest of the Gods, the great maker of the material for the creation, the "first beginner," by whose side the seven Chnemu stand, as architects, to help him, and who was named "the lord of truth," because the laws and conditions of being proceeded from him. He created also the germ of light, he stood therefore at the head of the solar Gods, and was called the creator of ice, from which, when he had cleft it, the sun and the moon came forth. Hence his name "the opener." Memphis was the centre of his worship, Apis his sacred animal. In the mysteries of the underworld, and of immortality he appears usually under the name of Ptah Sokar Osiris, who grants to the setting sun the power to rise again, as to the dead, the power of resurrection.

thoughts rushed down into his mind, and the divine passion awakened in his breast glowed and shone through his inspired language that soared every moment on freer and stronger wings. Melting into pathos, exulting in rapture, he praised the splendor of nature; and the words flowed from his lips like a limpid crystal-clear stream as he glorified the eternal order of things, and the incomprehensible wisdom and care of the Creator—the One, who is one alone, and great and without equal.

"So incomparable," he said in conclusion, "is the home which God has given us. All that He—the One —has created is penetrated with His own essence, and bears witness to His Goodness. He who knows how to find Him sees Him everywhere, and lives at every instant in the enjoyment of His glory. Seek Him, and when ye have found Him fall down and sing praises before Him. But praise the Highest, not only in gratitude for the splendor of that which he has created, but for having given us the capacity for delight in his work. Ascend the mountain peaks and look on the distant country, worship when the sunset glows with rubies, and the dawn with roses, go out in the nighttime, and look at the stars as they travel in eternal, unerring, immeasurable, and endless circles on silver barks through the blue vault of heaven, stand by the cradle of the child, by the buds of the flowers, and see how the mother bends over the one, and the bright dew-drops fall on the other. But would you know where the stream of divine goodness is most freely poured out, where the grace of the Creator bestows the richest gifts, and where His holiest altars are prepared? In your own heart; so long as it is

pure and full of love. In such a heart, nature is reflected as in a magic mirror, on whose surface the Beautiful shines in three-fold beauty. There the eye can reach far away over stream, and meadow, and hill, and take in the whole circle of the earth; there the morning and evening-red shine, not like roses and rubies, but like the very cheeks of the Goddess of Beauty; there the stars circle on, not in silence, but with the mighty voices of the pure eternal harmonies of heaven; there the child smiles like an infant-god, and the bud unfolds to magic flowers; finally, there thankfulness grows broader and devotion grows deeper, and we throw ourselves into the arms of a God, who —as I imagine his glory—is a God to whom the sublime nine great Gods pray as miserable and helpless suppliants."

The tomtom which announced the end of the hour interrupted him.

Pentaur ceased speaking with a deep sigh, and for a minute not a scholar moved.

At last the poet laid the papyrus roll out of his hand, wiped the sweat from his hot brow, and walked slowly towards the gate of the court, which led into the sacred grove of the temple. He had hardly crossed the threshold when he felt a hand laid upon his shoulder.

He looked round. Behind him stood Ameni.

"You fascinated your hearers, my friend," said the high-priest, coldly; "it is a pity that only the harp was wanting."

Ameni's words fell on the agitated spirit of the poet like ice on the breast of a man in fever. He knew this tone in his master's voice, for thus he was

accustomed to reprove bad scholars and erring priests; but to him he had never yet so spoken.

"It certainly would seem," continued the high-priest, bitterly, "as if in your intoxication you had forgotten what it becomes the teacher to utter in the lecture-hall. Only a few weeks since you swore on my hands to guard the mysteries, and this day you have offered the great secret of the Unnameable one, the most sacred posession of the initiated, like some cheap ware in the open market."

"Thou cuttest with knives," said Pentaur.

"May they prove sharp, and extirpate the undeveloped canker, the rank weed from your soul," cried the high-priest. "You are young, too young; not like the tender fruit-tree that lets itself be trained aright, and brought to perfection, but like the green fruit on the ground, which will turn to poison for the children who pick it up—yea even though it fall from a sacred tree. Gagabu and I received you among us, against the opinion of the majority of the initiated. We gainsaid all those who doubted your ripeness because of your youth; and you swore to me, gratefully and enthusiastically, to guard the mysteries and the law. To-day for the first time I set you on the battle-field of life beyond the peaceful shelter of the schools. And how have you defended the standard that it was incumbent on you to uphold and maintain?"

"I did that which seemed to me to be right and true," answered Pentaur deeply moved.

"Right is the same for you as for us—what the law prescribes; and what is truth?"

"None has lifted her veil," said Pentaur, "but my soul is the offspring of the soul-filled body of the All;

a portion of the infallible spirit of the Divinity stirs in my breast, and if it shows itself potent in me—"

"How easily we may mistake the flattering voice of self-love for that of the Divinity!"

"Cannot the Divinity which works and speaks in me—as in thee—as in each of us—recognize himself and his own voice?"

"If the crowd were to hear you," Ameni interrupted him, "each would set himself on his little throne, would proclaim the voice of the god within him as his guide, tear the law to shreds, and let the fragments fly to the desert on the east wind."

"I am one of the elect whom thou thyself hast taught to seek and to find the One. The light which I gaze on and am blest, would strike the crowd—I do not deny it—with blindness—"

"And nevertheless you blind our disciples with the dangerous glare—"

"I am educating them for future sages."

"And that with the hot overflow of a heart intoxicated with love!"

"Ameni!"

"I stand before you, uninvited, as your teacher, who reproves you out of the law, which always and everywhere is wiser than the individual, whose 'defender' the king—among his highest titles—boasts of being, and to which the sage bows as much as the common man whom we bring up to blind belief—I stand before you as your father, who has loved you from a child, and expected from none of his disciples more than from you; and who will therefore neither lose you nor abandon the hope he has set upon you—

"Make ready to leave our quiet house early to-morrow morning. You have forfeited your office of teacher. You shall now go into the school of life, and make yourself fit for the honored rank of the initiated which, by my error, was bestowed on you too soon. You must leave your scholars without any leave-taking, however hard it may appear to you. After the star of Sothis* has risen come for your instructions. You must in these next months try to lead the priesthood in the temple of Hatasu, and in that post to win back my confidence which you have thrown away. No remonstrance; to-night you will receive my blessing, and our authority—you must greet the rising sun from the terrace of the new scene of your labors. May the Unnameable stamp the law upon your soul!"

Ameni returned to his room.

He walked restlessly to and fro.

On a little table lay a mirror; he looked into the clear metal pane, and laid it back in its place again, as if he had seen some strange and displeasing countenance.

The events of the last few hours had moved him deeply, and shaken his confidence in his unerring judgment of men and things.

The priests on the other bank of the Nile were Bent-Anat's counsellors, and he had heard the princess spoken of as a devout and gifted maiden. Her incautious breach of the sacred institutions had seemed

* The holy star of Isis, Sirius or the dog star, whose course in the time of the Pharaohs coincided with the exact Solar year, and served at a very early date as a foundation for the reckoning of time among the Egyptians.

to him to offer a welcome opportunity for humiliating a member of the royal family.

Now he told himself that he had undervalued this young creature, that he had behaved clumsily, perhaps foolishly, to her; for he did not for a moment conceal from himself that her sudden change of demeanor resulted much more from the warm flow of her sympathy, or perhaps of her affection, than from any recognition of her guilt, and he could not utilize her transgression with safety to himself, unless she felt herself guilty.

Nor was he of so great a nature as to be wholly free from vanity, and his vanity had been deeply wounded by the haughty resistance of the princess.

When he commanded Pentaur to meet the princess with words of reproof, he had hoped to awaken his ambition through the proud sense of power over the mighty ones of the earth.

And now?

How had his gifted admirer, the most hopeful of all his disciples, stood the test.

The one ideal of his life, the unlimited dominion of the priestly idea over the minds of men, and of the priesthood over the king himself, had hitherto remained unintelligible to this singular young man.

He must learn to understand it.

"Here, as the least among a hundred who are his superiors, all the powers of resistance of his soaring soul have been roused," said Ameni to himself. "In the temple of Hatasu he will have to rule over the inferior orders of slaughterers of victims and incense-burners; and, by requiring obedience, will learn to

estimate the necessity of it. The rebel, to whom a throne devolves, becomes a tyrant!"

"Pentuar's poet soul," so he continued to reflect "has quickly yielded itself a prisoner to the charm of Bent-Anat; and what woman could resist this highly-favored being, who is radiant in beauty as Ra-Harmachis, and from whose lips flows speech as sweet as Techuti's.* They ought never to meet again, for no tie must bind him to the house of Rameses."

Again he paced to and fro, and murmured:

"How is this? Two of my disciples have towered above their fellows, in genius and gifts, like palm trees above their undergrowth. I brought them up to succeed me, to inherit my labors and my hopes.

"Mesu** fell away; and Pentaur may follow him.

"Must my aim be an unworthy one because it does not attract the noblest? Not so. Each feels himself made of better stuff than his companions in destiny, constitutes his own law, and fears to see the great expended in trifles; but I think otherwise; like a brook of ferruginous water from Lebanon, I mix with the great stream, and tinge it with my color."

Thinking thus Ameni stood still.

Then he called to one of the so-called "holy fathers," his private secretary, and said:

"Draw up at once a document, to be sent to all the priests'-colleges in the land. Inform them that the daughter of Rameses has lapsed seriously from the law, and defiled herself, and direct that public—you hear me *public*—prayers shall be put up for her purification

* Thoth-Hermes.

** Mesu is the Egyptian name of Moses, whom we may consider as a contemporary of Rameses, under whose successor the exodus of the Jews from Egypt took place.

in every temple. Lay the letter before me to be signed within an hour. But no! Give me your reed and palette; I will myself draw up the instructions."

The "holy father" gave him writing materials, and retired into the background. Ameni muttered: "The King will do us some unheard-of violence! Well, this writing may be the first arrow in opposition to his lance."

CHAPTER VIII.

The moon was risen over the city of the living that lay opposite the Necropolis of Thebes.

The evening song had died away in the temples, that stood about a mile from the Nile, connected with each other by avenues of sphinxes and pylons; but in the streets of the city life seemed only just really awake.

The coolness, which had succeeded the heat of the summer day, tempted the citizens out into the air, in front of their doors or on the roofs and turrets of their houses; or at the tavern-tables, where they listened to the tales of the story-tellers while they refreshed themselves with beer, wine, and the sweet juice of fruits. Many simple folks squatted in circular groups on the ground, and joined in the burden of songs which were led by an appointed singer, to the sound of a tabor and flute.

To the south of the temple of Amon stood the king's palace, and near it, in more or less extensive gardens, rose the houses of the magnates of the kingdom, among which, one was distinguished by it splendor and extent.

Paaker, the king's pioneer, had caused it to be erected after the death of his father, in the place of the

more homely dwelling of his ancestors, when he hoped to bring home his cousin, and install her as its mistress.

A few yards further to the east was another stately though older and less splendid house, which Mena, the king's charioteer, had inherited from his father, and which was inhabited by his wife Nefert and her mother Katuti, while he himself, in the distant Syrian land, shared the tent of the king, as being his body-guard.

Before the door of each house stood servants bearing torches, and awaiting the long deferred return home of their masters.

The gate, which gave admission to Paaker's plot of ground through the wall which surrounded it, was disproportionately, almost ostentatiously, high and decorated with various paintings. On the right hand and on the left, two cedar-trunks were erected as masts to carry standards; he had had them felled for the purpose on Lebanon, and forwarded by ship to Pelusium on the north-east coast of Egypt. Thence they were conveyed by the Nile to Thebes.

On passing through the gate one entered a wide, paved court-yard,* at the sides of which walks extended, closed in at the back, and with roofs supported on slender painted wooden columns. Here stood the pioneer's horses and chariots, here dwelt his slaves, and here the necessary store of produce for the month's requirements was kept.

* The Mohar's heritage is described from the beautiful pictures of gardens and houses in the tombs of Tel el Amarna (represented in Lepsius' monuments of Egypt.) To own a garden was considered particularly lucky. In the Papyrus IV. from Bulaq, published by Marictte, the author desires to show that every earthly possession leads to satiety, and chooses as an example the house with a garden. You have, he says, a well-watered piece of ground. You have surrounded your garden with hedges, and planted sycamores, arranging them on the land about your house. You can fill your hand with all the flower your eyes behold, yet it will happen that you will finally weary of them.

In the farther wall of this store-court was a very high doorway, that led into a large garden with rows of well-tended trees and trellised vines, clumps of shrubs, flowers, and beds of vegetables. Palms, sycamores, and acacia-trees, figs, pomegranates, and jasmine throve here particularly well—for Paaker's mother, Setchem, superintended the labors of the gardeners; and in the large tank in the midst there was never any lack of water for watering the beds and the roots of the trees, as it was always supplied by two canals, into which wheels turned by oxen poured water day and night from the Nile-stream.

On the right side of this plot of ground rose the one-storied dwelling house, its length stretching into distant perspective, as it consisted of a single row of living and bedrooms. Almost every room had its own door, that opened into a veranda supported by colored wooden columns, and which extended the whole length of the garden side of the house. This building was joined at a right angle by a row of store-rooms, in which the garden-produce in fruits and vegetables, the wine-jars, and the possessions of the house in woven stuffs, skins, leather, and other property were kept.

In a chamber of strong masonry lay safely locked up the vast riches accumulated by Paaker's father and by himself, in gold and silver rings, vessels and figures of beasts. Nor was there lack of bars of copper and of precious stones, particularly of lapis-lazuli and malachite.

In the middle of the garden stood a handsomely decorated kiosk, and a chapel with images of the Gods; in the background stood the statues of Paaker's ancestors in the form of Osiris wrapped in mummy-cloths.* The

* The justified dead became Osiris; that is to say, attained to the fullest union (Henosis) with the divinity. The Osiris-myth has been restored in all

faces, which were likenesses, alone distinguished these statues from each other.

The left side of the store-yard was veiled in gloom, yet the moonlight revealed numerous dark figures clothed only with aprons, the slaves of the king's pioneer, who squatted on the ground in groups of five or six, or lay near each other on thin mats of palm-bast, their hard beds.

Not far from the gate, on the right side of the court, a few lamps lighted up a group of dusky men, the officers of Paaker's household, who wore short, shirt-shaped, white garments, and who sat on a carpet round a table hardly two feet high. They were eating their evening-meal, consisting of a roasted antelope, and large flat cakes of bread. Slaves waited on them, and filled their earthen beakers with yellow beer. The steward cut up the great roast on the table, offered the intendant of the gardens a piece of antelope-leg, and said:*

its parts from the literary remains of the Egyptians. Plutarch records it in detail. Omitting minor matters it is as follows. Isis and Osiris reigned blissful and benignant in the Nile valley; Typhon (Seth) induced Osiris to lay himself in a chest, locked it with his 70 companions, and set it on the Nile, which carried it north, to the sea. It was cast on shore at Byblos. Isis sought it lamenting, found it, and brought it back to Egypt. While she was seeking for her son Horus, Typhon found the body, cut it into fourteen parts, and strewed them throughout the land. Horus having meanwhile grown up, fights with Typhon, and conquers him, and restores to his mother her husband, and to his father—who during his apparent death had continued to reign in the under-world—his earthly throne. This fanciful myth personified not only the cycle of the vegetative life of the earth, but also the path of the sun, and the fate of the human soul. The procreative power of nature, and the overflow of the Nile come from drought, the light of the sun from darkness; man passes through death to life, the principle of good comes from evil. Truth appears to be destroyed by Lies; yet each triumphs in the spring (the time of the inundations)—in the morning—in the other world—or in the day of retribution—as Osiris conquered through Horus.

* The Greeks and Romans report that the Egyptians were so addicted to satire and pungent witticisms, that they would hazard property and life to gratify their love of mockery. The scandalous pictures in the so-called kiosk of Medinet Habu, the caricatures in an indescribable papyrus at Turin, confirm these statements. There is a noteworthy passage in Flavius Vopiscus, that compares the Egyptians to the French, and which we think it advisable to quote here:

"Sunt enim Aegyptii, ut satis nosti, uiri uentosi furibundi iactantes iniuriosi atque adeo uani liberi nouarum rerum usque ad cantilenas publicas cupientes uersificatores epigrammatarii mathematici haruspices medici. Flav. Vopiscus ed. Peter II. p. 208, c. 7."

"My arms ache; the mob of slaves get more and more dirty and refractory."

"I notice it in the palm-trees," said the gardener, "you want so many cudgels that their crowns will soon be as bare as a moulting bird."

"We should do as the master does," said the head-groom, "and get sticks of ebony—they last a hundred years."

"At any rate longer than men's bones," laughed the chief neat-herd, who had come in to town from the pioneer's country estate, bringing with him animals for sacrifices, butter and cheese. "If we were all to follow the master's example, we should soon have none but cripples in the servant's house."

"Out there lies the lad whose collar-bone he broke yesterday," said the steward, "it is a pity, for he was a clever mat-plaiter. The old lord hit softer."

"You ought to know!" cried a small voice, that sounded mockingly behind the feasters.

They looked and laughed when they recognized the strange guest, who had approached them unobserved.

The new comer was a deformed little man about as big as a five-year-old boy, with a big head and oldish but uncommonly sharply-cut features.

The noblest Egyptians kept house-dwarfs for sport, and this little wight served the wife of Mena in this capacity. He was called Nemu, or "the dwarf," and his sharp tongue made him much feared, though he was a favorite, for he passed for a very clever fellow and was a good tale-teller.

"Make room for me, my lords," said the little man. "I take very little room, and your beer and

roast is in little danger from me, for my maw is no bigger than a fly's head."

"But your gall is as big as that of a Nile-horse," cried the cook.

"It grows," said the dwarf laughing, "when a turn-spit and spoon-wielder like you turns up. There—I will sit here."

"You are welcome," said the steward, "what do you bring?"

"Myself."

"Then you bring nothing great."

"Else I should not suit you either!" retorted the dwarf. "But seriously, my lady mother, the noble Katuti, and the Regent, who just now is visiting us, sent me here to ask you whether Paaker is not yet returned. He accompanied the princess and Nefert to the City of the Dead, and the ladies are not yet come in. We begin to be anxious, for it is already late."

The steward looked up at the starry sky and said: "The moon is already tolerably high, and my lord meant to be home before sun-down."

"The meal was ready," sighed the cook. "I shall have to go to work again if he does not remain out all night."

"How should he?" asked the steward. "He is with the princess Bent-Anat."

"And my mistress," added the dwarf.

"What will they say to each other," laughed the gardener; "your chief litter-bearer declared that yesterday on the way to the City of the Dead they did not speak a word to each other."

"Can you blame the lord if he is angry with the

lady who was betrothed to him, and then was wed to another? When I think of the moment when he learnt Nefert's breach of faith I turn hot and cold."

"Care the less for that," sneered the dwarf, "since you must be hot in summer and cold in winter."

"It is not evening all day," cried the head groom. "Paaker never forgets an injury, and we shall live to see him pay Mena—high as he is—for the affront he has offered him.

"My lady Katuti," interrupted Nemu, "stores up the arrears of her son-in-law."

"Besides, she has long wished to renew the old friendship with your house, and the Regent too preaches peace. Give me a piece of bread, steward. I am hungry!"

"The sacks, into which Mena's arrears flow, seem to be empty," laughed the cook.

"Empty! empty! much like your wit!" answered the dwarf. "Give me a bit of roast meat, steward; and you slaves bring me a drink of beer."

"You just now said your maw was no bigger than a fly's head," cried the cook, "and now you devour meat like the crocodiles in the sacred tank of Seeland.* You must come from a world of upside-down, where the men are as small as flies, and the flies as big as the giants of the past."

"Yet, I might be much bigger," mumbled the dwarf while he munched on unconcernedly, "perhaps as big as your spite which grudges me the third bit of meat, which the steward—may Zefa** bless him with

* The modern Fayoum, where, in the temple of the God Sebek, sacred crocodiles were kept and decorated, and expensively fed.

** Zefa, the goddess of the inundation.

great possessions!—is cutting out of the back of the antelope."

"There, take it, you glutton, but let out your girdle," said the steward laughing, "I had cut the slice for myself, and admire your sharp nose."

"Ah noses," said the dwarf, "they teach the knowing better than any haruspex what is inside a man."

"How is that?" cried the gardener.

"Only try to display your wisdom," laughed the steward; for, if you want to talk, you must at last leave off eating."

"The two may be combined," said the dwarf. "Listen then! A hooked nose, which I compare to a vulture's beak, is never found together with a submissive spirit. Think of the Pharaoh and all his haughty race. The Regent, on the contrary, has a straight, well-shaped, medium-sized nose, like the statue of Amon in the temple, and he is an upright soul, and as good as the Gods. He is neither overbearing nor submissive beyond just what is right; he holds neither with the great nor yet with the mean, but with men of our stamp. There's the king for us!"

"A king of noses!" exclaimed the cook, "I prefer the eagle Rameses. But what do you say to the nose of your mistress Nefert?"

"It is delicate and slender and moves with every thought like the leaves of flowers in a breath of wind, and her heart is exactly like it."

"And Paaker?" asked the head groom.

"He has a large short nose with wide open nostrils. When Seth whirls up the sand, and a grain of it flies

up his nose, he waxes angry—so it is Paaker's nose, and that only, which is answerable for all your blue bruises. His mother Setchem, the sister of my lady Katuti, has a little roundish soft—"

"You pigmy," cried the steward interrupting the speaker, "we have fed you and let you abuse people to your heart's content, but if you wag your sharp tongue against our mistress, I will take you by the girdle and fling you to the sky, so that the stars may remain sticking to your crooked hump."

At these words the dwarf rose, turned to go, and said indifferently: "I would pick the stars carefully off my back, and send you the finest of the planets in return for your juicy bit of roast. But here come the chariots. Farewell! my lords, when the vulture's beak seizes one of you and carries you off to the war in Syria, remember the words of the little Nemu who knows men and noses."

The pioneer's chariot rattled through the high gates into the court of his house, the dogs in their leashes howled joyfully, the head groom hastened towards Paaker and took the reins in his charge, the steward accompanied him, and the head cook retired into the kitchen to make ready a fresh meal for his master.

Before Paaker had reached the garden-gate, from the pylon of the enormous temple of Amon, was heard first the far-sounding clang of hard-struck plates of brass, and then the many-voiced chant of a solemn hymn.

The Mohar stood still, looked up to heaven, called

to his servants—"The divine star Sothis is risen!" threw himself on the earth, and lifted his arms towards the star in prayer.

The slaves and officers immediately followed his example.

No circumstance in nature remained unobserved by the priestly guides of the Egyptian people. Every phenomenon on earth or in the starry heavens was greeted by them as the manifestation of a divinity, and they surrounded the life of the inhabitants of the Nile-valley—from morning to evening—from the beginning of the inundation to the days of drought—with a web of chants and sacrifices, of processions and festivals, which inseparably knit the human individual to the Divinity and its earthly representatives the priesthood.

For many minutes the lord and his servants remained on their knees in silence, their eyes fixed on the sacred star, and listening to the pious chant of the priests.

As it died away Paaker rose. All around him still lay on the earth; only one naked figure, strongly lighted by the clear moonlight, stood motionless by a pillar near the slaves' quarters.

The pioneer gave a sign, the attendants rose; but Paaker went with hasty steps to the man who had disdained the act of devotion, which he had so earnestly performed, and cried:

"Steward, a hundred strokes on the soles of the feet of this scoffer."

The officer thus addressed bowed and said: "My lord, the surgeon commanded the mat-weaver not to

move, and he cannot lift his arm. He is suffering great pain. Thou didst break his collar-bone yesterday."

"It served him right!" said Paaker, raising his voice so much that the injured man could not fail to hear it. Then he turned his back upon him, and entered the garden; here he called the chief butler, and said: "Give the slaves beer for their night draught—to all of them, and plenty."

A few minutes later he stood before his mother, whom he found on the roof of the house, which was decorated with leafy plants, just as she gave her two-years'-old grand daughter, the child of her youngest son, into the arms of her nurse, that she might take her to bed.

Paaker greeted the worthy matron with reverence.

She was a woman of a friendly, homely aspect; several little dogs were fawning at her feet. Her son put aside the leaping favorites of the widow, whom they amused through many long hours of loneliness, and turned to take the child in his arms from those of the attendant. But the little one struggled with such loud cries, and could not be pacified, that Paaker set it down on the ground, and involuntarily exclaimed:

"The naughty little thing!"

"She has been sweet and good the whole afternoon," said his mother Setchem. "She sees you so seldom."

"May be," replied Paaker; "still I know this—the dogs love me, but no child will come to me."

"You have such hard hands."

"Take the squalling brat away," said Paaker to the nurse. "Mother, I want to speak to you."

Setchem quieted the child, gave it many kisses, and sent it to bed; then she went up to her son, stroked his cheeks, and said:

"If the little one were your own, she would go to you at once, and teach you that a child is the greatest blessing which the Gods bestow on us mortals."

Paaker smiled and said: "I know what you are aiming at—but leave it for the present, for I have something important to communicate to you."

"Well?" asked Setchem.

"To-day for the first time since—you know when, I have spoken to Nefert. The past may be forgotten. You long for your sister; go to her, I have nothing more to say against it."

Setchem looked at her son with undisguised astonishment; her eyes which easily filled with tears, now overflowed, and she hesitatingly asked: "Can I believe my ears; child, have you?—"

"I have a wish," said Paaker firmly, "that you should knit once more the old ties of affection with your relations; the estrangement has lasted long enough."

"Much too long!" cried Setchem.

The pioneer looked in silence at the ground, and obeyed his mother's sign to sit down beside her.

"I knew," she said, taking his hand, "that this day would bring us joy; for I dreamt of your father in Osiris, and when I was being carried to the temple, I was met, first by a white cow, and then by a wedding procession. The white ram of Amon, too, touched the wheat-cakes that I offered him."*

* It boded death to Germanicus when the Apis refused to eat out of his hand.

"Those are lucky presages," said Paaker in a tone of conviction.

"And let us hasten to seize with gratitude that which the Gods set before us," cried Setchem with joyful emotion. "I will go to-morrow to my sister and tell her that we shall live together in our old affection, and share both good and evil; we are both of the same race, and I know that, as order and cleanliness preserve a house from ruin and rejoice the stranger, so nothing but unity can keep up the happiness of the family and its appearance before people. What is bygone is bygone, and let it be forgotten. There are many women in Thebes besides Nefert, and a hundred nobles in the land would esteem themselves happy to win you for a son-in-law."

Paaker rose, and began thoughtfully pacing the broad space, while Setchem went on speaking.

"I know," she said, "that I have touched a wound in thy heart; but it is already closing, and it will heal when you are happier even than the charioteer Mena, and need no longer hate him. Nefert is good, but she is delicate and not clever, and scarcely equal to the management of so large a household as ours. Ere long I too shall be wrapped in mummy-cloths, and then if duty calls you into Syria some prudent housewife must take my place. It is no small matter. Your grandfather Assa often would say that a house well-conducted in every detail was a mark of a family owning an unspotted name, and living with wise liberality and secure solidity, in which each had his assigned place, his allotted duty to fulfil, and his fixed rights to demand. How often have I prayed to the Hathors that they may send you a wife after my own heart."

"A Setchem I shall never find!" said Paaker kissing his mother's forehead, "women of your sort are dying out."

"Flatterer!" laughed Setchem, shaking her finger at her son. But it is true. Those who are now growing up dress and smarten themselves with stuffs from Kaft,* mix their language with Syrian words, and leave the steward and housekeeper free when they themselves ought to command. Even my sister Katuti, and Nefert—

"Nefert is different from other women," interrupted Paaker, "and if you had brought her up she would know how to manage a house as well as how to ornament it."

Setchem looked at her son in surprise; then she said, half to herself: "Yes, yes, she is a sweet child; it is impossible for any one to be angry with her who looks into her eyes. And yet I was cruel to her because you were hurt by her, and because—but you know. But now you have forgiven, I forgive her, willingly; her and her husband."

Paaker's brow clouded, and while he paused in front of his mother he said with all the peculiar harshness of his voice:

"*He* shall pine away in the desert, and the hyænas of the North shall tear his unburied corpse."

At these words Setchem covered her face with her veil, and clasped her hands tightly over the amulets hanging round her neck. Then she said softly:

"How terrible you can be! I know well that you hate the charioteer, for I have seen the seven arrows over your couch over which is written 'Death to Mena.'

* Phœnicia.

That is a Syrian charm which a man turns against any one whom he desires to destroy. How black you look! Yes, it is a charm that is hateful to the Gods, and that gives the evil one power over him that uses it. Leave it to them to punish the criminal, for Osiris withdraws his favor from those who choose the fiend for their ally."

"My sacrifices," replied Paaker, "secure me the favor of the Gods; but Mena behaved to me like a vile robber, and I only return to him the evil that belongs to him. Enough of this! and if you love me, never again utter the name of my enemy before me. I have forgiven Nefert and her mother—that may satisfy you."

Setchem shook her head, and said: "What will it lead to! The war cannot last for ever, and if Mena returns the reconciliation of to-day will turn to all the more bitter enmity. I see only one remedy. Follow my advice, and let me find you a wife worthy of you."

"Not now!" exclaimed Paaker impatiently. "In a few days I must go again into the enemy's country, and do not wish to leave my wife, like Mena, to lead the life of a widow during my existence. Why urge it? my brother's wife and children are with you—that might satisfy you."

"The Gods know how I love them," answered Setchem; "but your brother Horus is the younger, and you the elder, to whom the inheritance belongs. Your little niece is a delightful plaything, but in your son I should see at once the future stay of our race, the future head of the family; brought up to my mind and your father's; for all is sacred to me that my dead hus-

band wished. He rejoiced in your early betrothal to Nefert, and hoped that a son of his eldest son should continue the race of Assa."

"It shall be by no fault of mine that any wish of his remains unfulfilled. The stars are high, mother; sleep well, and if to-morrow you visit Nefert and your sister, say to them that the doors of my house are open to them. But stay! Katuti's steward has offered to sell a herd of cattle to ours, although the stock on Mena's land can be but small. What does this mean?"

"You know my sister," replied Setchem. "She manages Mena's possessions, has many requirements, tries to vie with the greatest in splendor, sees the governor often in her house, her son is no doubt extravagant—and so the most necessary things may often be wanting."

Paaker shrugged his shoulders, once more embraced his mother and left her.

Soon after, he was standing in the spacious room in which he was accustomed to sit and to sleep when he was in Thebes. The walls of this room were whitewashed and decorated with pious sentences in hieroglyphic writing, which framed in the door and the windows opening into the garden.

In the middle of the farther wall was a couch in the form of a lion. The upper end of it imitated a lion's head, and the foot, its curling tail; a finely-dressed lion's skin was spread over the bed, and a head-rest of ebony, decorated with pious texts, stood on a high foot-step, ready for the sleeper.

Above the bed various costly weapons and whips were elegantly displayed, and below them the seven arrows over which Setchem had read the words "Death

to Mena." They were written across a sentence which enjoined feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, and clothing the naked;* with loving-kindness, alike to the great and the humble.

A niche by the side of the bed-head was closed with a curtain of purple stuff.

In each corner of the room stood a statue; three of them symbolized the triad of Thebes—Amon, Muth, and Chunsu—and the fourth the dead father of the pioneer. In front of each was a small altar for offerings, with a hollow in it, in which was an odoriferous essence. On a wooden stand were little images of the Gods and amulets in great number, and in several painted chests lay the clothes, the ornaments and the papers of the master. In the midst of the chamber stood a table and several stool-shaped seats.

When Paaker entered the room he found it lighted with lamps, and a large dog sprang joyfully to meet him. He let him spring upon him, threw him to the ground, let him once more rush upon him, and then kissed his clever head.

Before his bed an old negro of powerful build lay in deep sleep. Paaker shoved him with his foot and called to him as he awoke—

"I am hungry."

The grey-headed black man rose slowly, and left the room.

As soon as he was alone Paaker drew the philter from his girdle, looked at it tenderly, and put it in a box, in which there were several flasks of holy oils for sacrifice.

He was accustomed every evening to fill the hol-

* A command frequently repeated in the Sacred Writings, and often found in the monuments of the ancient empire, for instance at Beni-Hassan (12th dynasty).

lows in the altars with fresh essences, and to prostrate himself in prayer before the images of the Gods.

To-day he stood before the statue of his father, kissed its feet, and murmured: "Thy will shall be done. The woman whom thou didst intend for me shall indeed be mine—thy eldest son's."

Then he walked to and fro and thought over the events of the day.

At last he stood still, with his arms crossed, and looked defiantly at the holy images; like a traveller who drives away a false guide, and thinks to find the road by himself.

His eye fell on the arrows over his bed; he smiled, and striking his broad breast with his fist, he exclaimed, "I—I—I—"

His hound, who thought his master meant to call him, rushed up to him. He pushed him off and said—

"If you meet a hyæna in the desert, you fall upon it without waiting till it is touched by my lance —and if the Gods, my masters, delay, I myself will defend my right; but thou," he continued turning to the image of his father, "thou wilt support me."

This soliloquy was interrupted by the slaves who brought in his meal.

Paaker glanced at the various dishes which the cook had prepared for him, and asked: "How often shall I command that not a variety, but only one large dish shall be dressed for me? And the wine?"

"Thou art used never to touch it?" answered the old negro.

"But to-day I wish for some," said the pioneer. "Bring one of the old jars of red wine of Kakem."*

* A place not far from the Pyramid of Saqqarah in the Necropolis of

The slaves looked at each other in astonishment; the wine was brought, and Paaker emptied beaker after beaker. When the servants had left him, the boldest among them said: "Usually the master eats like a lion, and drinks like a midge, but to-day—"

"Hold your tongue!" cried his companion, "and come into the court, for Paaker has sent us out beer. The Hathors must have met him."

The occurrences of the day must indeed have taken deep hold on the inmost soul of the pioneer; for he, the most sober of all the warriors of Rameses, to whom intoxication was unknown, and who avoided the banquets of his associates—now sat at the midnight hours, alone at his table, and toped till his weary head grew heavy.

He collected himself, went towards his couch and drew the curtain which concealed the niche at the head of the bed. A female figure, with the head-dress and attributes of the Goddess Hathor, made of painted limestone, revealed itself.

Her countenance had the features of the wife of Mena.

The king, four years since, had ordered a sculptor to execute a sacred image with the lovely features of the newly-married bride of his charioteer, and Paaker had succeeded in having a duplicate made.

He now knelt down on the couch, gazed on the image with moist eyes, looked cautiously around to see if he was alone, leaned forward, pressed a kiss to the delicate, cold stone lips; laid down and went to

Memphis, where, even in remote times, there must have been a wine-press, as the red wine of Kakem (Kochome?) is often mentioned.

sleep without undressing himself, and leaving the lamps to burn themselves out.

Restless dreams disturbed his spirit, and when the dawn grew grey, he screamed out, tormented by a hideous vision, so pitifully, that the old negro, who had laid himself near the dog at the foot of his bed, sprang up alarmed, and while the dog howled, called him by his name to wake him.

Paaker awoke with a dull head-ache. The vision which had tormented him stood vividly before his mind, and he endeavored to retain it that he might summon a haruspex to interpret it. After the morbid fancies of the preceding evening he felt sad and depressed.

The morning-hymn rang into his room with a warning voice from the temple of Amon; he cast off evil thoughts, and resolved once more to resign the conduct of his fate to the Gods, and to renounce all the arts of magic.

As he was accustomed, he got into the bath that was ready for him. While splashing in the tepid water he thought with ever increasing eagerness of Nefert and of the philter which at first he had meant not to offer to her, but which actually was given to her by his hand, and which might by this time have begun to exercise its charm.

Love placed rosy pictures—hatred set blood-red images before his eyes. He strove to free himself from the temptations, which more and more tightly closed in upon him, but it was with him as with a man who has fallen into a bog, who, the more vehemently he tries to escape from the mire, sinks the deeper.

As the sun rose, so rose his vital energy and his

self-confidence, and when he prepared to quit his dwelling, in his most costly clothing, he had arrived once more at the decision of the night before, and had again resolved to fight for his purpose, without—and if need were—against the Gods.

The Mohar had chosen his road, and he never turned back when once he had begun a journey.

CHAPTER IX.

It was noon: the rays of the sun found no way into the narrow shady streets of the city of Thebes, but they blazed with scorching heat on the broad dyke-road which led to the king's castle, and which at this hour was usually almost deserted.

To-day it was thronged with foot-passengers and chariots, with riders and litter-bearers.

Here and there negroes poured water on the road out of skins, but the dust was so deep, that, in spite of this, it shrouded the streets and the passengers in a dry cloud, which extended not only over the city, but down to the harbor where the boats of the inhabitants of the Necropolis landed their freight.

The city of the Pharaohs was in unwonted agitation, for the storm-swift breath of rumor had spread some news which excited both alarm and hope in the huts of the poor as well as in the palaces of the great.

In the early morning three mounted messengers nad arrived from the king's camp with heavy letter-* bags, and had dismounted at the Regent's palace.

* The Egyptians were great letter-writers, and many of their letters have

As after a long drought the inhabitants of a village gaze up at the black thunder-cloud that gathers above their heads promising the refreshing rain—but that may also send the kindling lightning-flash or the destroying hail-storm—so the hopes and the fears of the citizens were centred on the news which came but rarely and at irregular intervals from the scene of war; for there was scarcely a house in the huge city which had not sent a father, a son, or a relative to the fighting hosts of the king in the distant north-east.

And though the couriers from the camp were much oftener the heralds of tears than of joy; though the written rolls which they brought told more often of death and wounds than of promotion, royal favors, and conquered spoil, yet they were expected with soul-felt longing and received with shouts of joy.

Great and small hurried after their arrival to the Regent's palace, and the scribes—who distributed the letters and read the news which was intended for public communication, and the lists of those who had fallen or perished—were closely besieged with enquirers.

Man has nothing harder to endure than uncertainty, and generally, when in suspense, looks forward to bad rather than to good news. And the bearers of ill ride faster than the messengers of weal.

The Regent Ani resided in a building adjoining the king's palace. His business-quarters surrounded

come down to us, they also had established postmen, and had a word for them in their language "fai chät." Maspero has treated the matter extremely well in his paper "du genre épistolaire chez les anciens Égyptiens de l'époque Pharaonique."

an immensely wide court, and consisted of a great number of rooms opening on to this court, in which numerous scribes worked with their chief. On the farther side was a large, veranda-like hall open at the front, with a roof supported by pillars.

Here Ani was accustomed to hold courts of justice, and to receive officers, messengers, and petitioners.

To-day he sat, visible to all comers, on a costly throne in this hall, surrounded by his numerous followers, and overlooking the crowd of people whom the guardians of the peace* guided with long staves, admitting them in troops into the court of the "High Gate," and then again conducting them out.

What he saw and heard was nothing joyful, for from each group surrounding a scribe arose a cry of woe. Few and far between were those who had to tell of the rich booty that had fallen to their friends.

An invisible web woven of wailing and tears seemed to envelope the assembly.

Here men were lamenting and casting dust upon their heads, there women were rending their clothes, shrieking loudly, and crying as they waved their veils: "oh, my husband! oh, my father! oh, my brother!"

Parents who had received the news of the death of their son fell on each other's neck weeping; old men plucked out their grey hair and beard; young women beat their forehead and breast, or implored the scribes who read out the lists to let them see for themselves the name of the beloved one who was for ever torn from them.

The passionate stirring of a soul, whether it be the result of joy or of sorrow, among us moderns covers its

* Presumably a kind of police.—*Transl.*

features with a veil, which it had no need of among the ancients.

Where the loudest laments sounded, a restless little being might be seen hurrying from group to group; it was Nemu, Katuti's dwarf, whom we know.

Now he stood near a woman of the better class, dissolved in tears because her husband had fallen in the last battle.

"Can you read?" he asked her; "up there on the architrave is the name of Rameses, with all his titles. 'Dispenser of life,' he is called. Aye indeed; he can create—widows; for he has all the husbands killed."

Before the astonished woman could reply, he stood by a man sunk in woe, and pulling his robe, said: "Finer fellows than your son have never been seen in Thebes. Let your youngest starve, or beat him to a cripple, else he also will be dragged off to Syria; for Rameses needs much good Egyptian meat for the Syrian vultures."

The old man, who had hitherto stood there in silent despair, clenched his fist. The dwarf pointed to the Regent, and said: "If he there wielded the sceptre, there would be fewer orphans and beggars by the Nile. To-day its sacred waters are still sweet, but soon it will taste as salt as the north sea with all the tears that have been shed on its banks."

It almost seemed as if the Regent had heard these words, for he rose from his seat and lifted his hands like a man who is lamenting.

Many of the bystanders observed this action; and loud cries of anguish filled the wide courtyard, which was soon cleared by soldiers to make room for other troops of people who were thronging in.

While these gathered round the scribes, the Regent Ani sat with quiet dignity on the throne, surrounded by his suite and his secretaries, and held audiences.

He was a man at the close of his fortieth year and the favorite cousin of the king.

Rameses I., the grandfather of the reigning monarch, had deposed the legitimate royal family, and usurped the sceptre of the Pharaohs. He descended from a Semitic race who had remained in Egypt at the time of the expulsion of the Hyksos,* and had distinguished itself by warlike talents under Thotmes and Amenophis. After his death he was succeeded by his son Seti, who sought to earn a legitimate claim to the throne by marrying Tuaa, the grand-daughter of Amenophis III. She presented him with an only son, whom he named after his father Rameses. This prince might lay claim to perfect legitimacy through his mother, who descended directly from the old house of sovereigns; for in Egypt a noble family—even that of the Pharaohs—might be perpetuated through women.

Seti proclaimed Rameses** partner of his throne, so as to remove all doubt as to the validity of his position. The young nephew of his wife Tuaa, the Regent Ani, who was a few years younger than Rameses, he caused to be brought up in the House of Seti, and treated him like his own son, while the other members

* These were an eastern race who migrated from Asia into Egypt, conquered the lower Nile-valley, and ruled over it for nearly 500 years, till they were driven out by the successors of the old legitimate Pharaohs, whose dominion had been confined to upper Egypt.

** Apparently even at his birth. According to an inscription at Abydos, published by Mariette, and first interpreted by Maspero, Rameses boasts of having been "King even in the egg." He is the Sesostris of the Greeks. His surname Sesesu-Ra is preserved on the monuments. When the Greeks speak of the great deeds of Sesostris, they include those of Seti and Rameses.

of the dethroned royal family were robbed of their possessions or removed altogether.

Ani proved himself a faithful servant to Seti, and to his son, and was trusted as a brother by the warlike and magnanimous Rameses, who however never disguised from himself the fact that the blood in his own veins was less purely royal than that which flowed in his cousin's.

It was required of the race of the Pharaohs of Egypt that it should be descended from the Sun-god Ra, and the Pharaoh could boast of this high descent only through his mother—Ani through both parents.

But Rameses sat on the throne, held the sceptre with a strong hand, and thirteen young sons promised to his house the lordship over Egypt to all eternity.

When, after the death of his warlike father, he went to fresh conquests in the north, he appointed Ani, who had proved himself worthy as governor of the province of Kush,* to the regency of the kingdom.

A vehement character often over-estimates the man who is endowed with a quieter temperament, into whose nature he cannot throw himself, and whose excellences he is unable to imitate; so it happened that the deliberate and passionless nature of his cousin impressed the fiery and warlike Rameses.

Ani appeared to be devoid of ambition, or the spirit of enterprise; he accepted the dignity that was laid upon him with apparent reluctance, and seemed a particularly safe person, because he had lost both wife and child, and could boast of no heir.

He was a man of more than middle height; his

* Ethiopia.

features were remarkably regular—even beautifully-cut, but smooth and with little expression. His clear blue eyes and thin lips gave no evidence of the emotions that filled his heart; on the contrary, his countenance wore a soft smile that could adapt itself to haughtiness, to humility, and to a variety of shades of feeling, but which could never be entirely banished from his face.

He had listened with affable condescension to the complaint of a landed proprietor, whose cattle had been driven off for the king's army, and had promised that his case should be enquired into. The plundered man was leaving full of hope; but when the scribe who sat at the feet of the Regent enquired to whom the investigation of this encroachment of the troops should be entrusted, Ani said: "Each one must bring a victim to the war; it must remain among the things that are done, and cannot be undone."

The Nomarch* of Suan, in the southern part of the country, asked for funds for a necessary, new embankment. The Regent listened to his eager representation with benevolence, nay with expressions of sympathy; but assured him that the war absorbed all the funds of the state, that the chests were empty; still he felt inclined—even if they had not failed—to sacrifice a part of his own income to preserve the endangered arable land of his faithful province of Suan, to which he desired greeting.

As soon as the Nomarch had left him, he commanded that a considerable sum should be taken out of the Treasury, and sent after the petitioner.

From time to time in the middle of conversation,

* Chief of a Nome or district.

he arose, and made a gesture of lamentation, to show to the assembled mourners in the court that he sympathized in the losses which had fallen on them.

The sun had already passed the meridian, when a disturbance, accompanied by loud cries, took possession of the masses of people, who stood round the scribes in the palace court.

Many men and women were streaming together towards one spot, and even the most impassive of the Thebans present turned their attention to an incident so unusual in this place.

A detachment of constabulary made a way through the crushing and yelling mob, and another division of Lybian police led a prisoner towards a side gate of the court. Before they could reach it, a messenger came up with them, from the Regent, who desired to be informed as to what happened.

The head of the officers of public safety followed him, and with eager excitement informed Ani, who was waiting for him, that a tiny man, the dwarf of the Lady Katuti, had for several hours been going about in the court, and endeavoring to poison the minds of the citizens with seditious speeches.

Ani ordered that the misguided man should be thrown into the dungeon; but so soon as the chief officer had left him, he commanded his secretary to have the dwarf brought into his presence before sundown.

While he was giving this order an excitement of another kind seized the assembled multitude.

As the sea parted and stood on the right hand and on the left of the Hebrews, so that no wave wetted the foot of the pursued fugitives, so the crowd of

people of their own free will, but as if in reverent submission to some high command, parted and formed a broad way, through which walked the high-priest of the House of Seti, as, full robed and accompanied by some of the "holy fathers," he now entered the court.

The Regent went to meet him, bowed before him, and then withdrew to the back of the hall with him alone.

"It is nevertheless incredible," said Ameni, "that our serfs are to follow the militia!"

"Rameses requires soldiers—to conquer," replied the Regent.

"And we bread—to live," exclaimed the priest.

"Nevertheless I am commanded, at once, before the seed-time, to levy the temple-serfs. I regret the order, but the king is the will, and I am only the hand."

"The hand, which he makes use of to sequester ancient rights, and to open a way to the desert over the fruitful land." *

"Your acres will not long remain unprovided for. Rameses will win new victories with the increased army, and the help of the Gods."

"The Gods! whom he insults!"

"After the conclusion of peace he will reconcile the Gods by doubly rich gifts. He hopes confidently for an early end to the war, and writes to me that after the next battle he wins he intends to offer terms to the Cheta. A plan of the king's is also spoken of—to marry again, and, indeed, the daughter of the Cheta King Chetasar."

Up to this moment the Regent had kept his eyes cast down. Now he raised them, smiling, as if he would fain enjoy Ameni's satisfaction, and asked:

* "With good management," said the first Napoleon, "the Nile encroaches upon the desert, with bad management the desert encroaches upon the Nile."

"What dost thou say to this project?"

"I say," returned Ameni, and his voice, usually so stern, took a tone of amusement, "I say that Rameses seems to think that the blood of thy cousin and of his mother, which gives him his right to the throne, is incapable of pollution."

"It is the blood of the Sun-god!"

"Which runs but half pure in his veins, but wholly pure in thine."

The Regent made a deprecatory gesture, and said softly, with a smile which resembled that of a dead man:

"We are not alone."

"No one is here," said Ameni, "who can hear us; and what I say is known to every child."

"But if it came to the king's ears—" whispered Ani, "he—"

"He would perceive how unwise it is to derogate from the ancient rights of those on whom it is incumbent to prove the purity of blood of the sovereign of this land. However, Rameses sits on the throne; may life bloom for him, with health and strength!"*

The Regent bowed, and then asked:

"Do you propose to obey the demand of the Pharaoh without delay?"

"He is the king. Our council, which will meet in a few days, can only determine *how*, and not *whether* we shall fulfil his command."

"You will retard the departure of the serfs, and Rameses requires them at once. The bloody labor of the war demands new tools."

* A formula which even in private letters constantly follows the name of the Pharaoh.

"And the peace will perhaps demand a new master, who understands how to employ the sons of the land to its greatest advantage—a genuine son of Ra."

The Regent stood opposite the high-priest, motionless as an image cast in bronze, and remained silent; but Ameni lowered his staff before him as before a god, and then went into the fore part of the hall.

When Ani followed him, a soft smile played as usual upon his countenance, and full of dignity he took his seat on the throne.

"Art thou at an end of thy communications?" he asked the high-priest.

"It remains for me to inform you all," replied Ameni with a louder voice, to be heard by all the assembled dignitaries, "that the princess Bent-Anat yesterday morning committed a heavy sin, and that in all the temples in the land the Gods shall be entreated with offerings to take her uncleanness from her."

Again a shadow passed over the smile on the Regent's countenance. He looked meditatively on the ground, and then said:

"To-morrow I will visit the House of Seti; till then I beg that this affair may be left to rest."

Ameni bowed, and the Regent left the hall to withdraw to a wing of the king's palace, in which he dwelt.

On his writing-table lay sealed papers. He knew that they contained important news for him; but he loved to do violence to his curiosity, to test his resolution, and like an epicure to reserve the best dish till the last.

He now glanced first at some unimportant letters.

A dumb negro, who squatted at his feet, burned the

papyrus rolls which his master gave him in a brazier. A secretary made notes of the short facts which Ani called out to him, and the ground work was laid of the answers to the different letters.

At a sign from his master this functionary quitted the room, and Ani then slowly opened a letter from the king, whose address: "To my brother Ani," showed that it contained, not public, but private information.

On these lines, as he well knew, hung his future life, and the road it should follow.

With a smile, that was meant to conceal even from himself his deep inward agitation, he broke the wax which sealed the short manuscript in the royal hand.

"What relates to Egypt, and my concern for my country, and the happy issue of the war," wrote the Pharaoh, "I have written to you by the hand of my secretary; but these words are for the brother, who desires to be my son, and I write to him myself. The lordly essence of the Divinity which dwells in me, readily brings a quick 'Yes' or 'No' to my lips, and it decides for the best. Now you demand my daughter Bent-Anat to wife, and I should not be Rameses if I did not freely confess that before I had read the last words of your letter, a vehement 'No' rushed to my lips. I caused the stars to be consulted, and the entrails of the victims to be examined, and they were adverse to your request; and yet I could not refuse you, for you are dear to me, and your blood is royal as my own. Even more royal, an old friend said, and warned me against your ambition and your exaltation. Then my heart changed, for I were not Seti's son if I allow myself to injure a friend through idle apprehensions;

and he who stands so high that men fear that he may try to rise above Rameses, seems to me to be worthy of Bent-Anat. Woo her, and, should she consent freely, the marriage may be celebrated on the day when I return home. You are young enough to make a wife happy, and your mature wisdom will guard my child from misfortune. Bent-Anat shall know that her father, and king, encourages your suit; but pray too to the Hathors, that they may influence Bent-Anat's heart in your favor, for to her decision we must both submit."

The Regent had changed color several times while reading this letter. Now he laid it on the table with a shrug of his shoulders, stood up, clasped his hand behind him, and, with his eyes cast meditatively on the floor, leaned against one of the pillars which supported the beams of the roof.

The longer he thought, the less amiable his expression became. "A pill sweetened with honey,* such as they give to women," he muttered to himself. Then he went back to the table, read the king's letter through once more, and said: "One may learn from it how to deny by granting, and at the same time not to forget to give it a brilliant show of magnanimity. Rameses knows his daughter. She is a girl like any other, and will take good care not to choose a man twice as old as herself, and who might be her father. Rameses will 'submit'—I am to 'submit!' And to what? to the judgment and the choice of a wilful child!"

With these words he threw the letter so vehemently on to the table, that it slipped off on to the floor.

* Two recipes for pills are found in the papyri, one with honey for women, and one without for men.

The mute slave picked it up, and laid it carefully on the table again, while his master threw a ball into a silver bason.

Several attendants rushed into the room, and Ani ordered them to bring to him the captive dwarf of the Lady Katuti. His soul rose in indignation against the king, who in his remote camp-tent could fancy he had made him happy by a proof of his highest favor.

When we are plotting against a man we are inclined to regard him as an enemy, and if he offers us a rose we believe it to be for the sake, not of the perfume, but of the thorns.

The dwarf Nemu was brought before the Regent and threw himself on the ground at his feet.

Ani ordered the attendants to leave him, and said to the little man:

"You compelled me to put you in prison. Stand up!"

The dwarf rose and said, "Be thanked—for my arrest too."

The Regent looked at him in astonishment; but Nemu went on half humbly, half in fun, "I feared for my life, but thou hast not only not shortened it, but hast prolonged it; for in the solitude of the dungeon time seemed long, and the minutes grown to hours."

"Keep your wit for the ladies," replied the Regent. "Did I not know that you meant well, and acted in accordance with the Lady Katuti's fancy, I would send you to the quarries."

"My hands," mumbled the dwarf, "could only break stones for a game of draughts; but my tongue is like the water, which makes one peasant rich, and carries away the fields of another."

"We shall know how to dam it up."

"For my lady and for thee it will always flow the right way," said the dwarf. "I showed the complaining citizens who it is that slaughters their flesh and blood, and from whom to look for peace and content. I poured caustic into their wounds, and praised the physician."

"But unasked and recklessly," interrupted Ani; "otherwise you have shown yourself capable, and I am willing to spare you for a future time. But overbusy friends are more damaging than intelligent enemies. When I need your services I will call for you. Till then avoid speech. Now go to your mistress, and carry to Katuti this letter which has arrived for her."

"Hail to Ani, the son of the Sun!" cried the dwarf kissing the Regent's foot. "Have I no letter to carry to my mistress Nefert?"

"Greet her from me," replied the Regent. "Tell Katuti I will visit her after the next meal. The king's charioteer has not written, yet I hear that he is well. Go now, and be silent and discreet."

The dwarf quitted the room, and Ani went into an airy hall, in which his luxurious meal was laid out, consisting of many dishes prepared with special care. His appetite was gone, but he tasted of every dish, and gave the steward, who attended on him, his opinion of each.

Meanwhile he thought of the king's letter, of Bent-Anat, and whether it would be advisable to expose himself to a rejection on her part.

After the meal he gave himself up to his body-servant, who carefully shaved, painted, dressed, and decorated him, and then held the mirror before him.

He considered the reflection with anxious observation, and when he seated himself in his litter to be borne to the house of his friend Katuti, he said to himself that he still might claim to be called a handsome man.

If he paid his court to Bent-Anat—if she listened to his suit—what then?

He would refer it to Katuti, who always knew how to say a decisive word when he, entangled in a hundred *pros* and *cons*, feared to venture on a final step.

By her advice he had sought to wed the princess, as a fresh mark of honor—as an addition to his revenues—as a pledge for his personal safety. His heart had never been more or less attached to her than to any other beautiful woman in Egypt. Now her proud and noble personality stood before his inward eye, and he felt as if he must look up to it as to a vision high out of his reach. It vexed him that he had followed Katuti's advice, and he began to wish his suit had been repulsed. Marriage with Bent-Anat seemed to him beset with difficulties. His mood was that of a man who craves some brilliant position, though he knows that its requirements are beyond his powers—that of an ambitious soul to whom kingly honors are offered on condition that he will never remove a heavy crown from his head. If indeed another plan should succeed, if—and his eyes flashed eagerly—if fate set him on the seat of Rameses, then the alliance with Bent-Anat would lose its terrors; there would he be her absolute King and Lord and Master, and no one could require him to account for what he might be to her, or vouchsafe to her.

CHAPTER X.

During the events we have described the house of the charioteer Mena had not remained free from visitors.

It resembled the neighboring estate of Paaker, though the buildings were less new, the gay paint on the pillars and walls was faded, and the large garden lacked careful attention. In the vicinity of the house only, a few well-kept beds blazed with splendid flowers, and the open colonnade, which was occupied by Katuti and her daughter, was furnished with royal magnificence.

The elegantly carved seats were made of ivory, the tables of ebony, and they, as well as the couches, had gilt feet. The artistically worked Syrian drinking vessels on the sideboard, tables, and consoles were of many forms; beautiful vases full of flowers stood everywhere; rare perfumes rose from alabaster cups, and the foot sank in the thick pile of the carpets which covered the floor.

And over the apparently careless arrangement of these various objects there reigned a peculiar charm, an indescribably fascinating something.

Stretched at full-length on a couch, and playing with a silky-haired white cat, lay the fair Nefert—fanned to coolness by a negro-girl—while her mother Katuti nodded a last farewell to her sister Setchem and to Paaker.

Both had crossed this threshold for the first time for four years, that is since the marriage of Mena with

Nefert, and the old enmity seemed now to have given way to heartfelt reconciliation and mutual understanding.

After the pioneer and his mother had disappeared behind the pomegranate shrubs at the entrance of the garden, Katuti turned to her daughter and said:

"Who would have thought it yesterday? I believe Paaker loves you still."

Nefert colored, and exclaimed softly, while she hit the kitten gently with her fan—

"Mother!"

Katuti smiled.

She was a tall woman of noble demeanor, whose sharp but delicately-cut features and sparkling eyes could still assert some pretensions to feminine beauty. She wore a long robe, which reached below her ankles; it was of costly material, but dark in color, and of a studied simplicity. Instead of the ornaments in bracelets, anklets, ear and finger-rings, in necklaces and clasps, which most of the Egyptian ladies—and indeed her own sister and daughter—were accustomed to wear, she had only fresh flowers, which were never wanting in the garden of her son-in-law. Only a plain gold diadem, the badge of her royal descent, always rested, from early morning till late at night, on her high brow—for a woman too high, though nobly formed—and confined the long blue-black hair, which fell unbraided down her back, as if its owner contemned the vain labor of arranging it artistically. But nothing in her exterior was unpremeditated, and the unbejewelled wearer of the diadem, in her plain dress, and with her royal figure, was everywhere sure of being

observed, and of finding imitators of her dress, and indeed of her demeanor.

And yet Katuti had long lived in need; aye at the very hour when we first make her acquaintance, she had little of her own, but lived on the estate of her son-in-law as his guest, and as the administrator of his possessions; and before the marriage of her daughter she had lived with her children in a house belonging to her sister Setchem.

She had been the wife of her own brother,* who had died young, and who had squandered the greatest part of the possessions which had been left to him by the new royal family, in an extravagant love of display.

When she became a widow, she was received as a sister with her children by her brother-in-law, Paaker's father. She lived in a house of her own, enjoyed the income of an estate assigned to her by the old Mohar, and left to her son-in-law the care of educating her son, a handsome and overbearing lad, with all the claims and pretensions of a youth of distinction.

Such great benefits would have oppressed and disgraced the proud Katuti, if she had been content with them and in every way agreed with the giver. But this was by no means the case; rather, she believed that she might pretend to a more brilliant outward position, felt herself hurt when her heedless son, while he attended school, was warned to work more seriously, as he would by and by have to rely on his own skill

* Marriages between brothers and sisters were allowed in ancient Egypt. The Ptolemaic princes adopted this, which was contrary to the Macedonian customs. When Ptolemy II. Philadelphus married his sister Arsinoë, it seems to have been thought necessary to excuse it by the relative positions of Venus and Saturn at that period, and the constraining influences of these planets.

and his own strength. And it had wounded her when occasionally her brother-in-law had suggested economy, and had reminded her, in his straightforward way, of her narrow means, and the uncertain future of her children.

At this she was deeply offended, for she ventured to say that her relatives could never, with all their gifts, compensate for the insults they heaped upon her; and thus taught them by experience that we quarrel with no one more readily than with the benefactor whom we can never repay for all the good he bestows on us.

Nevertheless, when her brother-in-law asked the hand of her daughter for his son, she willingly gave her consent.

Nefert and Paaker had grown up together, and by this union she foresaw that she could secure her own future and that of her children.

Shortly after the death of the Mohar, the charioteer Mena had proposed for Nefert's hand, but would have been refused if the king himself had not supported the suit of his favorite officer. After the wedding, she retired with Nefert to Mena's house, and undertook, while he was at the war, to manage his great estates, which however had been greatly burthened with debt by his father.

Fate put the means into her hands of indemnifying herself and her children for many past privations, and she availed herself of them to gratify her innate desire to be esteemed and admired; to obtain admission for her son, splendidly equipped, into a company of chariot-warriors of the highest class; and to surround her daughter with princely magnificence.

When the Regent, who had been a friend of her late husband, removed into the palace of the Pharaohs, he made her advances, and the clever and decided woman knew how to make herself at first agreeable, and finally indispensable, to the vacillating man.

She availed herself of the circumstance that she, as well as he, was descended from the old royal house to pique his ambition, and to open to him a view, which even to think of, he would have considered forbidden as a crime, before he became intimate with her.

Ani's suit for the hand of the princess Bent-Anat was Katuti's work. She hoped that the Pharoah would refuse, and personally offend the Regent, and so make him more inclined to tread the dangerous road which she was endeavoring to smooth for him. The dwarf Nemu was her pliant tool.

She had not initiated him into her projects by any words; he however gave utterance to every impulse of her mind in free language, which was punished only with blows from a fan, and, only the day before, had been so audacious as to say that if the Pharoah were called Ani instead of Rameses, Katuti would be not a queen but a goddess for she would then have not to obey, but rather to guide, the Pharaoh, who indeed himself was related to the Immortals.

Katuti did not observe her daughter's blush, for she was looking anxiously out at the garden gate, and said:

"Where can Nemu be! There must be some news arrived for us from the army."

"Mena has not written for so long," Nefert said softly. "Ah! here is the steward!"

Katuti turned to the officer, who had entered the veranda through a side door.

"What do you bring," she asked.

"The dealer Abscha," was the answer, "presses for payment. The new Syrian chariot and the purple cloth—"

"Sell some corn," ordered Katuti.

"Impossible, for the tribute to the temples is not yet paid, and already so much has been delivered to the dealers that scarcely enough remains over for the maintenance of the household and for sowing."

"Then pay with beasts."

"But, madam," said the steward sorrowfully, "only yesterday, we again sold a herd to the Mohar; and the water-wheels must be turned, and the corn must be thrashed, and we need beasts for sacrifice, and milk, butter, and cheese, for the use of the house, and dung for firing."*

Katuti looked thoughtfully at the ground.

"It must be," she said presently. "Ride to Hermonthis, and say to the keeper of the stud that he must have ten of Mena's golden bays driven over here."

"I have already spoken to him," said the steward, "but he maintains that Mena strictly forbade him to part with even one of the horses, for he is proud of the stock. Only for the chariot of the lady Nefert—"

"I require obedience," said Katuti decidedly and cutting short the steward's words, "and I expect the horses to-morrow."

* In Egypt, where there is so little wood, to this day the dried dung of beasts is the commonest kind of fuel.

"But the stud-master is a daring man, whom Mena looks upon as indispensable, and he—"

"I command here, and not the absent," cried Katuti enraged, "and I require the horses in spite of the former orders of my son-in-law."

Nefert, during this conversation, pulled herself up from her indolent attitude. On hearing the last words she rose from her couch, and said, with a decision which surprised even her mother—

"The orders of my husband must be obeyed. The horses that Mena loves shall stay in their stalls. Take this armlet that the king gave me; it is worth more than twenty horses."

The steward examined the trinket, richly set with precious stones, and looked enquiringly at Katuti. She shrugged her shoulders, nodded consent, and said—

"Abscha shall hold it as a pledge till Mena's booty arrives. For a year your husband has sent nothing of importance."

When the steward was gone, Nefert stretched herself again on her couch and said wearily—

"I thought we were rich."

"We might be," said Katuti bitterly; but as she perceived that Nefert's cheeks again were glowing, she said amiably, "Our high rank imposes great duties on us. Princely blood flows in our veins, and the eyes of the people are turned on the wife of the most brilliant hero in the king's army. They shall not say that she is neglected by her husband. How long Mena remains away!"

"I hear a noise in the court," said Nefert. "The Regent is coming."

Katuti turned again towards the garden.

A breathless slave rushed in, and announced that Bent-Anat, the daughter of the king, had dismounted at the gate, and was approaching the garden with the prince Rameri.

Nefert left her couch, and went with her mother to meet the exalted visitors.

As the mother and daughter bowed to kiss the robe of the princess, Bent-Anat signed them back from her. "Keep farther from me," she said; "the priests have not yet entirely absolved me from my uncleanness."

"And in spite of them thou art clean in the sight of Ra!" exclaimed the boy who accompanied her, her brother of seventeen, who was brought up at the House of Seti, which however he was to leave in a few weeks —and he kissed her.

"I shall complain to Ameni of this wild boy," said Bent-Anat smiling. "He would positively accompany me. Your husband, Nefert, is his model, and I had no peace in the house, for we came to bring you good news."

"From Mena?" asked the young wife, pressing her hand to her heart.

"As you say," returned Bent-Anat. "My father praises his ability, and writes that he, before all others, will have his choice at the dividing of the spoil."

Nefert threw a triumphant glance at her mother, and Katuti drew a deep breath.

Bent-Anat stroked Nefert's cheeks like those of a child. Then she turned to Katuti, led her into the garden, and begged her to aid her, who had so

early lost her mother, with her advice in a weighty matter.

"My father," she continued, after a few introductory words, "informs me that the Regent Ani desires me for his wife, and advises me to reward the fidelity of the worthy man with my hand. He advises it, you understand—he does not command."

"And thou?" asked Katuti.

"And I," replied Bent-Anat decidedly, "must refuse him."

"Thou must!"

Bent-Anat made a sign of assent and went on:

"It is quite clear to me. I can do nothing else."

"Then thou dost not need my counsel, since even thy father, I well know, will not be able to alter thy decision."

"No God even could alter this one!" said Bent-Anat firmly. "But you are Ani's friend, and, as I esteem him, I would save him this humiliation. Endeavor to persuade him to give up his suit. I will meet him as though I knew nothing of his letter to my father."

Katuti looked down reflectively. Then she said—"The Regent certainly likes very well to pass his hours of leisure with me gossiping or playing draughts, but I do not know that I should dare to speak to him of so grave a matter."

"Marriage-projects are women's affairs," said Bent-Anat, smiling.

"But the marriage of a princess is a state event," replied the widow. "In this case it is true the *uncle only courts his niece, who is dear to him, and who he

* Among the Orientals—and even the Spaniards—it was and is common to give the name of uncle to a parent's cousin. *Note to Am. Edition.*

hopes will make the second half of his life the brightest. Ani is kind and without severity. Thou would'st win in him a husband, who would wait on thy looks, and bow willingly to thy strong will."

Bent-Anat's eyes flashed, and she hastily exclaimed: "That is exactly what forces the decisive irrevocable 'No' to my lips. Do you think that because I am as proud as my mother, and resolute like my father, that I wish for a husband whom I could govern and lead as I would? How little you know me! I will be obeyed by my dogs, my servants, my officers, if the Gods so will it, by my children. Abject beings, who will kiss my feet, I meet on every road, and can buy by the hundred, if I wish it, in the slave market. I may be courted twenty times, and reject twenty suitors, but not because I fear that they might bend my pride and my will; on the contrary, because I feel them increased. The man to whom I could wish to offer my hand must be of a loftier stamp, must be greater, firmer, and better than I, and I will flutter after the mighty wing-strokes of his spirit, and smile at my own weakness, and glory in admiring his superiority."

Katuti listened to the maiden with the smile by which the experienced love to signify their superiority over the visionary.

"Ancient times may have produced such men," she said. "But if in these days thou thinkest to find one, thou wilt wear the lock of youth,* till thou art grey. Our thinkers are no heroes, and our heroes are no sages. Here come thy brother and Nefert."

* The lock of youth was a curl of hair which all the younger members of princely families wore at the side of the head. The young Horus is represented with it.

"Will you persuade Ani to give up his suit!" said the princess urgently.

"I will endeavor to do so, for thy sake," replied Katuti. Then, turning half to the young Rameri and half to his sister, she said:

"The chief of the House of Seti, Ameni, was in his youth such a man as thou paintest, Bent-Anat. Tell us, thou son of Rameses, that art growing up under the young sycamores, which shall some day over-shadow the land—whom dost thou esteem the highest among thy companions? Is there one among them, who is conspicuous above them all for a lofty spirit and strength of intellect?"

The young Rameri looked gaily at the speaker, and said laughing: "We are all much alike, and do more or less willingly what we are compelled, and by preference every thing that we ought not."

"A mighty soul—a youth, who promises to be a second* Snefru, a Thotmes, or even an Ameni? Dost thou know none such in the House of Seti?" asked the widow.

"Oh yes!" cried Rameri with eager certainty.

"And he is—?" asked Katuti.

"Pentaur, the poet," exclaimed the youth. Bent-Anat's face glowed with scarlet color, while her brother went on to explain.

"He is noble and of a lofty soul, and all the Gods dwell in him when he speaks. Formerly we used to go to sleep in the lecture-hall; but his words carry us away, and if we do not take in the full meaning of his thoughts, yet we feel that they are genuine and noble."

* The 1st king of the 4th dynasty, who to a late date was held in high honor, and of whom it is said in several places that "the like has not been seen since the days of Snefru." The monuments of his time are the earliest which have generally come down to us. Up to a late period certain priests were specially assigned to the worship of his Manes.

Bent-Anat breathed quicker at these words, and her eyes hung on the boy's lips.

"You know him, Bent-Anat," continued Rameri. "He was with you at the paraschites' house, and in the temple-court when Ameni pronounced you unclean. He is as tall and handsome as the God Menth,* and I feel that he is one of those whom we can never forget when once we have seen them. Yesterday, after you had left the temple, he spoke as he never spoke before; he poured fire into our souls. Do not laugh, Katuti, I feel it burning still. This morning we were informed that he had been sent from the temple, who knows where—and had left us a message of farewell. It was not thought at all necessary to communicate the reason to us; but we know more than the masters think. He did not reprove you strongly enough, Bent-Anat, and therefore he is driven out of the House of Seti. We have agreed to combine to ask for him to be recalled; Anana is drawing up a letter to the chief priest, which we shall all subscribe. It would turn out badly for one alone, but they cannot be at all of us at once. Very likely they will have the sense to recall him. If not, we shall all complain to our fathers, and they are not the meanest in the land."

"It is a complete rebellion," cried Katuti. "Take care, you lordlings; Ameni and the other prophets are not to be trifled with."

"Nor we either," said Rameri laughing, "If Pentaur is kept in banishment, I shall appeal to my father to place me at the school at Heliopolis or Chennu, and the others will follow me. Come, Bent-Anat, I must be back in the trap before sunset. Excuse me,

* Menth, the Egyptian God of War.

Katuti, so we call the school. Here comes your little Nemu."

The brother and sister left the garden.

As soon as the ladies, who accompanied them, had turned their backs, Bent-Anat grasped her brother's hand with unaccustomed warmth, and said:

"Avoid all imprudence; but your demand is just, and I will help you with all my heart."

CHAPTER XI.

As soon as Bent-Anat had quitted Mena's domain, the dwarf Nemu entered the garden with a letter, and briefly related his adventures; but in such a comical fashion that both the ladies laughed, and Katuti, with a lively gaiety, which was usually foreign to her, while she warned him, at the same time praised his acuteness. She looked at the seal of the letter and said:

"This is a lucky day; it has brought us great things, and the promise of greater things in the future."

Nefert came close up to her and said imploringly: "Open the letter, and see if there is nothing in it from him."

Katuti unfastened the wax, looked through the letter with a hasty glance, stroked the cheek of her child, and said:

"Perhaps your brother has written for him; I see no line in his handwriting."

Nefert on her side glanced at the letter, but not to read it, only to seek some trace of the well-known handwriting of her husband.

Like all the Egyptian women of good family she

could read, and during the first two years of her married life she had often—very often—had the opportunity of puzzling, and yet rejoicing, over the feeble signs which the iron hand of the charioteer had scrawled on the papyrus for her whose slender fingers could guide the reed pen with firmness and decision.

She examined the letter, and at last said, with tears in her eyes:

"Nothing! I will go to my room, mother."

Katuti kissed her and said, "Hear first what your brother writes."

But Nefert shook her head, turned away in silence, and disappeared into the house.

Katuti was not very friendly to her son-in-law, but her heart clung to her handsome, reckless son, the very image of her lost husband, the favorite of women, and the gayest youth among the young nobles who composed the chariot-guard of the king.

How fully he had written to-day—he who wielded the reed-pen so laboriously.

This really was a letter; while, usually, he only asked in the fewest words for fresh funds for the gratification of his extravagant tastes.

This time she might look for thanks, for not long since he must have received a considerable supply, which she had abstracted from the income of the possessions entrusted to her by her son-in-law.

She began to read.

The cheerfulness, with which she had met the dwarf, was insincere, and had resembled the brilliant colors of the rainbow, which gleam over the stagnant waters of a bog. A stone falls into the pool, the

colors vanish, dim mists rise up, and it becomes foul and clouded.

The news which her son's letter contained fell, indeed, like a block of stone on Katuti's soul.

Our deepest sorrows always flow from the same source as might have filled us with joy, and those wounds burn the fiercest which are inflicted by a hand we love.

The farther Katuti went in the lamentably incorrect epistle—which she could only decipher with difficulty—which her darling had written to her, the paler grew her face, which she several times covered with her trembling hands, from which the letter dropped.

Nemu squatted on the earth near her, and followed all her movements.

When she sprang forward with a heart-piercing scream, and pressed her forehead to a rough palm-trunk, he crept up to her, kissed her feet, and exclaimed with a depth of feeling that overcame even Katuti, who was accustomed to hear only gay or bitter speeches from the lips of her jester—

"Mistress! lady! what has happened?"

Katuti collected herself, turned to him, and tried to speak; but her pale lips remained closed, and her eyes gazed dimly into vacancy as though a catalepsy had seized her.

"Mistress! Mistress!" cried the dwarf again, with growing agitation. "What is the matter? shall I call thy daughter?"

Katuti made a sign with her hand, and cried feebly: "The wretches! the reprobates!"

Her breath began to come quickly, the blood mounted to her cheeks and her flashing eyes; she trod

upon the letter, and wept so loud and passionately, that the dwarf, who had never before seen tears in her eyes, raised himself timidly, and said in mild reproach: "Katuti!"

She laughed bitterly, and said with a trembling voice:

"Why do you call my name so loud! it is disgraced and degraded. How the nobles and the ladies will rejoice! Now envy can point at us with spiteful joy—and a minute ago I was praising this day! They say one should exhibit one's happiness in the streets, and conceal one's misery; on the contrary, on the contrary! Even the Gods should not know of one's hopes and joys, for they too are envious and spiteful!"

Again she leaned her head against the palm-tree.

"Thou speakest of shame, and not of death," said Nemu, "and I learned from thee that one should give nothing up for lost excepting the dead."

These words had a powerful effect on the agitated woman. Quickly and vehemently she turned upon the dwarf saying.

"You are clever, and faithful too, so listen! but if you were Amon himself there is nothing to be done—"

"We must try," said Nemu, and his sharp eyes met those of his mistress.

"Speak," he said, and trust me. Perhaps I can be of no use; but that I can be silent thou knowest."

"Before long the children in the streets will talk of what this tells me," said Katuti, laughing with bitterness, "only Nefert must know nothing of what has happened—nothing, mind; what is that? the Regent coming! quick, fly; tell him I am suddenly taken ill,

very ill; I cannot see him, not now! No one is to be admitted—no one, do you hear?"

The dwarf went.

When he came back after he had fulfilled his errand, he found his mistress still in a fever of excitement.

"Listen," she said; "first the smaller matter, then the frightful, the unspeakable. Rameses loads Mena with marks of his favor. It came to a division of the spoils of war for the year; a great heap of treasure lay ready for each of his followers, and the charioteer had to choose before all the others."

"Well?" said the dwarf.

"Well!" echoed Katuti. "Well! how did the worthy householder care for his belongings at home, how did he seek to relieve his indebted estate? It is disgraceful, hideous! He passed by the silver, the gold, the jewels, with a laugh; and took the captive daughter of the Danaid princes, and led her into his tent."

"Shameful!" muttered the dwarf.

"Poor, poor Nefert!" cried Katuti, covering her face with her hands.

"And what more?" asked Nemu hastily.

"That," said Katuti, "that is—but I will keep calm—quite calm and quiet. You know my son. He is heedless, but he loves me and his sister more than anything in the world. I, fool as I was, to persuade him to economy, had vividly described our evil plight, and after that disgraceful conduct of Mena he thought of us and of our anxieties. His share of the booty was small, and could not help us. His comrades threw dice for the shares they had obtained—he staked his to win more for us. He lost—all—all—and at last against

an enormous sum, still thinking of us, and only of us, he staked the mummy of his dead father.* He lost. If he does not redeem the pledge before the expiration of the third month, he will fall into infamy,** the mummy will belong to the winner, and disgrace and ignominy will be my lot and his."

Katuti pressed her hands on her face, the dwarf muttered to himself, "The gambler and hypocrite!"

When his mistress had grown calmer, he said:

"It is horrible, yet all is not lost. How much is the debt?"

It sounded like a heavy curse, when Katuti replied, "Thirty Babylonian talents."***

The dwarf cried out, as if an asp had stung him. "Who dared to bid against such a mad stake?"

"The Lady Hathor's son, Antef," answered Katuti, "who has already gambled away the inheritance of his fathers, in Thebes."

"He will not remit one grain of wheat of his claim," cried the dwarf. "And Mena?"

"How could my son turn to him after what had happened? The poor child implores me to ask the assistance of the Regent."

"Of the Regent?" said the dwarf, shaking his big head. "Impossible!"

"I know, as matters now stand; but his place, his name."

* It was a king of the fourth dynasty, named Asychis by Herodotus, who it is admitted was the first to pledge the mummies of his ancestors. "He who stakes this pledge and fails to redeem the debt shall, after his death, rest neither in his father's tomb nor in any other, and sepulture shall be denied to his descendants." Herod. II. 136.

** This it would appear was the heaviest punishment which could fall on an Egyptian Soldier. Diod. I. 78.

*** £6,750 sterling.

"Mistress," said the dwarf, and deep purpose rang in the words, "do not spoil the future for the sake of the present. If thy son loses his honor under King Rameses, the future King, Ani, may restore it to him. If the Regent now renders you all an important service, he will regard you as amply paid when our efforts have succeeded, and he sits on the throne. He lets himself be led by thee now because thou hast no need of his help, and dost seem to work only for his sake, and for his elevation. As soon as thou hast appealed to him, and he has assisted thee, all thy confidence and freedom will be gone, and the more difficult he finds it to raise so large a sum of money at once, the angrier he will be to think that thou art making use of him. Thou knowest his circumstances."

"He is in debt," said Katuti. "I know that."

"Thou should'st know it," cried the dwarf, "for thou thyself hast forced him to enormous expenses. He has won the people of Thebes with dazzling festive displays; as guardian of Apis* he gave a large donation to Memphis; he bestowed thousands on the leaders of the troops sent into Ethiopia, which were equipped by him; what his spies cost him at the camp of the king, thou knowest. He has borrowed sums of money from most of the rich men in the country, and that is well, for so many creditors are so many allies. The Regent is a bad debtor; but the king Ani, they reckon, will be a grateful payer."

Katuti looked at the dwarf in astonishment.

"You know men!" she said.

* When Apis (the sacred bull) died under Ptolemy I. Soter, his keepers spent not only the money which they had received for his maintenance, in his obsequies, but borrowed 50 talents of silver (£11,250) from the king. In the time of Diodorus 100 talents were spent for the same purpose.

"To my sorrow!" replied Nemu. "Do not apply to the Regent, and before thou dost sacrifice the labor of years, and thy future greatness, and that of those near to thee, sacrifice thy son's honor."

"And my husband's, and my own?" exclaimed Katuti. "How can you know what that is! Honor is a word that the slave may utter, but whose meaning he can never comprehend; you rub the weals that are raised on you by blows; to me every finger pointed at me in scorn makes a wound like an ashwood lance with a poisoned tip of brass. Oh ye holy Gods! who can help us?"

The miserable woman pressed her hands over her eyes, as if to shut out the sight of her own disgrace.

The dwarf looked at her compassionately, and said in a changed tone:

"Dost thou remember the diamond which fell out of Nefert's handsomest ring? We hunted for it, and could not find it. Next day, as I was going through the room, I trod on something hard; I stooped down and found the stone. What the noble organ of sight, the eye, overlooked, the callous despised sole of the foot found; and perhaps the small slave, Nemu, who knows nothing of honor, may succeed in finding a mode of escape which is not revealed to the lofty soul of his mistress!"

"What are you thinking of?" asked Katuti.

"Escape," answered the dwarf. "Is it true that thy sister Setchem has visited thee, and that you are reconciled?"

"She offered me her hand, and I took it!"

"Then go to her. Men are never more helpful than after a reconciliation. The enmity they have

driven out, seems to leave as it were a freshly-healed wound which must be touched with caution; and Setchem is of thy own blood, and kind-hearted."

"She is not rich," replied Katuti. "Every palm in her garden comes from her husband, and belongs to her children."

"Paaker, too, was with you?"

"Certainly only by the entreaty of his mother—he hates my son-in-law."

"I know it," muttered the dwarf, "but if Nefert would ask him?"

The widow drew herself up indignantly. She felt that she had allowed the dwarf too much freedom, and ordered him to leave her alone.

Nemu kissed her robe and asked timidly—

"Shall I forget that thou hast trusted me, or am I permitted to consider further as to thy son's safety?"

Katuti stood for a moment undecided, then she said—

"You were clever enough to find what I carelessly dropped; perhaps some God may show you what I ought to do. Now leave me."

"Wilt thou want me early to-morrow?"

"No."

"Then I will go to the Necropolis, and offer a sacrifice."

"Go!" said Katuti, and went towards the house with the fatal letter in her hand.

Nemu stayed behind alone; he looked thoughtfully at the ground, murmuring to himself.

"She must not lose her honor; not at present, or indeed all will be lost. What is this honor? We all come into the world without it, and most of us go

to the grave without knowing it, and very good folks notwithstanding. Only a few who are rich and idle weave it in with the homely stuff of their souls, as the Kuschites* do their hair with grease and oils, till it forms a cap of which, though it disfigures them, they are so proud that they would rather have their ears cut off than the monstrous thing. I see, I see—but before I open my mouth I will go to my mother. She knows more than twenty prophets."

CHAPTER XII.

Before the sun had risen the next morning, Nemu got himself ferried over the Nile, with the small white ass which Mena's deceased father had given him many years before. He availed himself of the cool hour which precedes the rising of the sun for his ride through the Necropolis.

Well acquainted as he was with every stock and stone, he avoided the high roads which led to the goal of his expedition, and trotted towards the hill which divides the valley of the royal tombs from the plain of the Nile.

Before him opened a noble amphitheatre of lofty lime-stone peaks, the background of the stately terrace-temple which the proud ancestress of two kings of the fallen family, the great Hatasu, had erected to their memory, and to the Goddess Hathor.

Nemu left the sanctuary to his left, and rode up the steep hill-path which was the nearest way from the plain to the valley of the tombs.

* The monuments show us that the ancient negroes of the upper Nile were devoted to these repulsive fashions as their modern descendants are.

Below him lay a bird's eye view of the terrace-building of Hatasu, and before him, still slumbering in cool dawn, was the Necropolis with its houses and temples and colossal statues, the broad Nile glistening with white sails under the morning mist; and, in the distant east, rosy with the coming sun, stood Thebes and her gigantic temples.

But the dwarf saw nothing of the glorious panorama that lay at his feet; absorbed in thought, and stooping over the neck of his ass, he let the panting beast climb and rest at its pleasure.

When he had reached half the height of the hill, he perceived the sound of footsteps coming nearer and nearer to him.

The vigorous walker had soon reached him, and bid him good morning, which he civilly returned.

The hill-path was narrow, and when Nemu observed that the man who followed him was a priest, he drew up his donkey on a level spot, and said reverently—

"Pass on, holy father; for thy two feet carry thee quicker than my four."

"A sufferer needs my help," replied the leech Nebsecht, Pentaur's friend, whom we have already seen in the House of Seti, and by the bed of the paraschites' daughter; and he hastened on so as to gain on the slow pace of the rider.

Then rose the glowing disk of the sun above the eastern horizon, and from the sanctuaries below the travellers rose up the pious many-voiced chant of praise.

Nemu slipped off his ass, and assumed an attitude of prayer; the priest did the same; but while the

dwarf devoutly fixed his eyes on the new birth of the Sun-God from the eastern range, the priest's eyes wandered to the earth, and his raised hand fell to pick up a rare fossil shell which lay on the path.

In a few minutes Nebsecht rose, and Nemu followed him.

"It is a fine morning," said the dwarf; "the holy fathers down there seem more cheerful to-day than usual."

The surgeon laughed assent. "Do you belong to the Necropolis?" he said. "Who here keeps dwarfs?"

"No one," answered the little man. "But I will ask thee a question. Who that lives here behind the hill is of so much importance, that a leech from the House of Seti sacrifices his night's rest for him?"

"The one I visit is mean, but the suffering is great," answered Nebsecht.

Nemu looked at him with admiration, and muttered, "That is noble, that is ——" but he did not finish his speech; he struck his brow and exclaimed, "You are going, by the desire of the Princess Bent-Anat, to the child of the paraschites that was run over. I guessed as much. The food must have an excellent after-taste, if a gentleman rises so early to eat it. How is the poor child doing?"

There was so much warmth in these last words that Nebsecht, who had thought the dwarf's reproach uncalled for, answered in a friendly tone—

"Not so badly; she may be saved."

"The Gods be praised!" exclaimed Nemu, while the priest passed on.

Nebsecht went up and down the hillside at a redoubled pace, and had long taken his place by the

couch of the wounded Uarda in the hovel of the parashites, when Nemu drew near to the abode of his Mother Hekt, from whom Paaker had received the philter.

The old woman sat before the door of her cave.

Near her lay a board, fitted with cross pieces, between which a little boy was stretched in such a way that they touched his head and his feet.

Hekt understood the art of making dwarfs; playthings in human form were well paid for, and the child on the rack, with his pretty little face, promised to be a valuable article.

As soon as the sorceress saw some one approaching, she stooped over the child, took him up board and all in her arms, and carried him into the cave. Then she said sternly:

"If you move, little one, I will flog you. Now let me tie you."

"Don't tie me," said the child, "I will be good and lie still."

"Stretch yourself out," ordered the old woman, and tied the child with a rope to the board. "If you are quiet, I'll give you a honey-cake by-and-bye, and let you play with the young chickens."

The child was quiet, and a soft smile of delight and hope sparkled in his pretty eyes. His little hand caught the dress of the old woman, and with the sweetest coaxing tone, which God bestows on the innocent voices of children, he said:

"I will be as still as a mouse, and no one shall know that I am here; but if you give me the honey-cake you will untie me for a little, and let me go to Uarda."

"She is ill!—what do you want there?"

"I would take her the cake," said the child, and his eyes glistened with tears.

The old woman touched the child's chin with her finger, and some mysterious power prompted her to bend over him to kiss him. But before her lips had touched his face she turned away, and said, in a hard tone:

"Lie still! by and bye we will see." Then she stooped, and threw a brown sack over the child. She went back into the open air, greeted Nemu, entertained him with milk, bread and honey, gave him news of the girl who had been run over, for he seemed to take her misfortune very much to heart, and finally asked:

"What brings you here? The Nile was still narrow when you last found your way to me, and now it has been falling some time.* Are you sent by your mistress, or do you want my help? All the world is alike. No one goes to see any one else unless he wants to make use of him. What shall I give you?"

"I want nothing," said the dwarf, "but—"

"You are commissioned by a third person," said the witch, laughing. "It is the same thing. Whoever wants a thing for some one else only thinks of his own interest."

"May be," said Nemu. "At any rate your words show that you have not grown less wise since I saw you last—and I am glad of it, for I want your advice."

* This is the beginning of November. The Nile begins slowly to rise early in June; between the 15th and 20th of July it suddenly swells rapidly, and in the first half of October, not, as was formerly supposed, at the end of September, the inundation reaches its highest level. Heinrich Barth established these data beyond dispute. After the water has begun to sink it rises once more in October and to a higher level than before. Then it soon falls, at first slowly, but by degrees quicker and quicker.

"Advice is cheap. What is going on out there?" Nemu related to his mother shortly, clearly, and without reserve, what was plotting in his mistress's house, and the frightful disgrace with which she was threatened through her son.

The old woman shook her grey head thoughtfully several times: but she let the little man go on to the end of his story without interrupting him. Then she asked, and her eyes flashed as she spoke:

"And you really believe that you will succeed in putting the sparrow on the eagle's perch—Ani on the throne of Rameses?"

"The troops fighting in Ethiopia are for us," cried Nemu. "The priests declare themselves against the king, and recognize in Ani the genuine blood of Ra."

"That is much," said the old woman.

"And many dogs are the death of the gazelle," said Nemu laughing.

"But Rameses is not a gazelle to run, but a lion," said the old woman gravely. "You are playing a high game."

"We know it," answered Nemu. "But it is for high stakes—there is much to win."

"And all to lose," muttered the old woman, passing her fingers round her scraggy neck. "Well, do as you please—it is all the same to me who it is sends the young to be killed, and drives the old folks' cattle from the field. What do they want with me?"

"No one has sent me," answered the dwarf. "I come of my own free fancy to ask you what Katuti must do to save her son and her house from dishonor."

"Hm!" hummed the witch, looking at Nemu while

she raised herself on her stick. "What has come to you that you take the fate of these great people to heart as if it were your own?"

The dwarf reddened, and answered hesitatingly—

"Katuti is a good mistress, and, if things go well with her, there may be windfalls for you and me."

Hekt shook her head doubtfully.

"A loaf for you perhaps, and a crumb for me!" she said. "There is more than that in your mind, and I can read your heart as if you were a ripped up raven. You are one of those who can never keep their fingers at rest, and must knead everybody's dough; must push, and drive and stir something. Every jacket is too tight for you. If you were three feet taller, and the son of a priest, you might have gone far. High you will go, and high you will end; as the friend of a king—or on the gallows."

The old woman laughed; but Nemu bit his lips, and said:

"If you had sent me to school, and if I were not the son of a witch, and a dwarf, I would play with men as they have played with me; for I am cleverer than all of them, and none of their plans are hidden from me. A hundred roads lie before me, when they don't know whether to go out or in; and where they rush heedlessly forwards I see the abyss that they are running to."

"And nevertheless you come to me?" said the old woman sarcastically.

"I want your advice," said Nemu seriously. "Four eyes see more than one, and the impartial looker-on sees clearer than the player; besides you are bound to help me."

The old woman laughed loud in astonishment. "Bound!" she said, "I? and to what if you please?"

"To help me," replied the dwarf, half in entreaty, and half in reproach. "You deprived me of my growth, and reduced me to a cripple."

"Because no one is better off than you dwarfs," interrupted the witch.

Nemu shook his head, and answered sadly—

"You have often said so—and perhaps for many others, who are born in misery like me—perhaps—you are right; but for me—you have spoilt my life; you have crippled not my body only but my soul, and have condemned me to sufferings that are nameless and unutterable."

The dwarf's big head sank on his breast, and with his left hand he pressed his heart.

The old woman went up to him kindly.

"What ails you?" she asked, "I thought it was well with you in Mena's house."

"You thought so?" cried the dwarf. "You who show me as in a mirror what I am, and how mysterious powers throng and stir in me? You made me what I am by your arts; you sold me to the treasurer of Rameses, and he gave me to the father of Mena, his brother-in-law. Fifteen years ago! I was a young man then, a youth like any other, only more passionate, more restless, and fiery than they. I was given as a plaything to the young Mena, and he harnessed me to his little chariot, and dressed me out with ribbons and feathers, and flogged me when I did not go fast enough. How the girl—for whom I would have given my life—the porter's daughter, laughed when I, dressed up in motley, hopped panting in front of the chariot, and the

young lord's whip whistled in my ears wringing the sweat from my brow, and the blood from my broken heart. Then Mena's father died, the boy went to school, and I waited on the wife of his steward, whom Katuti banished to Hermonthis. That was a time! The little daughter of the house made a doll* of me, laid me in the cradle, and made me shut my eyes and pretend to sleep, while love and hatred, and great projects were strong within me. If I tried to resist they beat me with rods; and when once, in a rage, I forgot myself, and hit little Mertitefs hard, Mena, who came in, hung me up in the store-room to a nail by my girdle, and left me to swing there; he said he had forgotten to take me down again. The rats fell upon me; here are the scars, these little white spots here—look! They perhaps will some day wear out, but the wounds that my spirit received in those hours have not yet ceased to bleed. Then Mena married Nefert, and, with her, his mother-in-law, Katuti, came into the house. She took me from the steward, I became indispensable to her; she treats me like a man, she values my intelligence and listens to my advice,—therefore I will make her great, and with her, and through her, I will wax mighty. If Ani mounts the throne, we will guide him—you, and I, and she! Rameses must fall, and with him Mena, the boy who degraded my body and poisoned my soul!"

During this speech the old woman had stood in silence opposite the dwarf. Now she sat down on her rough wooden seat, and said, while she proceeded to pluck a lapwing:

"Now I understand you; you wish to be revenged.

* Dolls belonging to the time of the Pharaohs are preserved in the museums, for instance, the jointed ones at Leyden.

You hope to rise high, and I am to whet your knife, and hold the ladder for you. Poor little man! there, sit down—drink a gulp of milk to cool you, and listen to my advice. Katuti wants a great deal of money to escape dishonor. She need only pick it up—it lies at her door."

The dwarf looked at the witch in astonishment.

"The Mohar Paaker is her sister Setchem's son. Is he not?"

"As you say."

"Katuti's daughter Nefert is the wife of your master Mena, and another would like to tempt the neglected little hen into his yard."

"You mean Paaker, to whom Nefert was promised before she went after Mena."

"Paaker was with me the day before yesterday."

"With you?"

"Yes, with me, with old Hekt—to buy a love philter. I gave him one, and as I was curious I went after him, saw him give the water to the little lady, and found out her name."

"And Nefert drank the magic drink?" asked the dwarf horrified.

"Vinegar and turnip juice," laughed the old witch. "A lord who comes to me to win a wife is ripe for anything. Let Nefert ask Paaker for the money, and the young scapegrace's debts are paid."

"Katuti is proud, and repulsed me severely when I proposed this."

"Then she must sue to Paaker herself for the money. Go back to him, make him hope that Nefert is inclined to him, tell him what distresses the ladies, and if he refuses, but only if he refuses, let him see that you know something of the little dose."

The dwarf looked meditatively on the ground, and then said, looking admiringly at the old woman: "That is the right thing."

"You will find out the lie without my telling you," mumbled the witch; "your business is not perhaps such a bad one as it seemed to me at first. Katuti may thank the ne'er-do-well who staked his father's corpse. You don't understand me? Well, if you are really the sharpest of them all over there, what must the others be?"

"You mean that people will speak well of my mistress for sacrificing so large a sum for the sake— ?"

"Whose sake? why speak well of her?" cried the old woman impátiently. "Here we deal with other things, with actual facts. There stands Paaker—there the wife of Mena. If the Mohar sacrifices a fortune for Nefert, he will be her master, and Katuti will not stand in his way; she knows well enough why her nephew pays for her. But some one else stops the way, and that is Mena. It is worth while to get him out of the way. The charioteer stands close to the Pharaoh, and the noose that is flung at one may easily fall round the neck of the other too. Make the Mohar your ally, and it may easily happen that your rat-bites may be paid for with mortal wounds, and Rameses who, if you marched against him openly, might blow you to the ground, may be hit by a lance thrown from an ambush. When the throne is clear, the weak legs of the Regent may succeed in clambering up to it with the help of the priests. Here you sit—open-mouthed; and I have told you nothing that you might not have found out for yourself."

"You are a perfect cask of wisdom!" exclaimed the dwarf.

"And now you will go away," said Hekt, "and reveal your schemes to your mistress and the Regent, and they will be astonished at your cleverness. To-day you still know that I have shown you what you have to do; to-morrow you will have forgotten it; and the day after to-morrow you will believe yourself possessed by the inspiration of the nine great Gods. I know that; but I cannot give anything for nothing. You live by your smallness, another makes his living with his hard hands, I earn my scanty bread by the thoughts of my brain. Listen! when you have half won Paaker, and Ani shows himself inclined to make use of him, then say to him that I may know a secret—and I do know one, I alone—which may make the Mohar the sport of his wishes, and that I may be disposed to sell it."

"That shall be done! certainly, mother," cried the dwarf. "What do you wish for?"

"Very little," said the old woman. "Only a permit that makes me free to do and to practise whatever I please, unmolested even by the priests, and to receive an honorable burial after my death."

"The Regent will hardly agree to that; for he must avoid everything that may offend the servants of the Gods."

"And do everything," retorted the old woman, "that can degrade Rameses in their sight. Ani, do you hear, need not write me a new license, but only renew the old one granted to me by Rameses when I cured his favorite horse. They burnt it with my other possessions, when they plundered my house, and denounced me and my belongings for sorcery. The permit of Rameses is what I want, nothing more."

"You shall have it," said the dwarf. "Good-by; I

am charged to look into the tomb of our house, and see whether the offerings for the dead are regularly set out; to pour out fresh essences and have various things renewed. When Sechet has ceased to rage, and it is cooler, I shall come by here again, for I should like to call on the paraschites, and see how the poor child is."

CHAPTER XIII.

During this conversation two men had been busily occupied, in front of the paraschites' hut, in driving piles into the the earth, and stretching a torn linen cloth upon them.

One of them, old Pinem, whom we have seen tending his grandchild, requested the other from time to time to consider the sick girl and to work less noisily.

After they had finished their simple task, and spread a couch of fresh straw under the awning, they too sat down on the earth, and looked at the hut before which the surgeon Nebsecht was sitting waiting till the sleeping girl should wake.

"Who is that?" asked the leech of the old man, pointing to his young companion, a tall sunburnt soldier with a bushy red beard.

"My son," replied the paraschites, "who is just returned from Syria."

"Uarda's father?" asked Nebsecht.

The soldier nodded assent, and said with a rough voice, but not without cordiality:

"No one could guess it by looking at us—she is

so white and rosy. Her mother was a foreigner, and she has turned out as delicate as she was. I am afraid to touch her with my little finger—and there comes a chariot over the brittle doll, and does not quite crush her, for she is still alive."

"Without the help of this holy father," said the paraschites, approaching the surgeon, and kissing his robe, "you would never have seen her alive again. May the Gods reward thee for what thou hast done for us poor folks!"

"And we can pay too," cried the soldier, slapping a full purse that hung at his gridle. "We have taken plunder in Syria, and I will buy a calf, and give it to thy temple."

"Offer a beast of dough,* rather," replied Nebsecht, "and if you wish to show yourself grateful to me, give the money to your father, so that he may feed and nurse your child in accordance with my instructions."

"Hm," murmured the soldier; he took the purse from his girdle, flourished it in his hand, and said, as he handed it to the paraschites:

"I should have liked to drink it! but take it, father, for the child and my mother."

While the old man hesitatingly put out his hand for the rich gift, the soldier recollected himself and said, opening the purse:

"Let me take out a few rings, for to-day I cannot go dry. I have two or three comrades lodging in the red Tavern. That is right. There,—take the rest of the rubbish."

* Hogs were sacrificed at the feasts of Selene (the Egyptian Nechebt). "The poor offer pigs made of dough."—Herodotus II., 47. Various kinds of cakes baked in the form of animals are represented on the monuments.

Nebsecht nodded approvingly at the soldier, and he, as his father gratefully kissed the surgeon's hand, exclaimed:

"Make the little one sound, holy father! It is all over with gifts and offerings, for I have nothing left; but there are two iron fists and a breast like the wall of a fortress. If at any time thou dost want help, call me, and I will protect thee against twenty enemies. Thou hast saved my child—good! Life for life. I sign myself thy blood-ally—there."

With these words he drew his poniard out of his girdle. He scratched his arm, and let a few drops of his blood run down on a stone at the feet of Nebsecht —"Look," he said. "There is my bond, Kaschta has signed himself thine, and thou canst dispose of my life as of thine own. What I have said, I have said."

"I am a man of peace," Nebsecht stammered, "And my white robe protects me. But I believe our patient is awake."

The physician rose, and entered the hut.

Uarda's pretty head lay on her grandmother's lap, and her large blue eyes turned contentedly on the priest.

"She might get up and go out into the air," said the old woman. "She has slept long and soundly."

The surgeon examined her pulse, and her wound, on which green leaves were laid.

"Excellent," he said; "who gave you this healing herb?"

The old woman shuddered, and hesitated; but Uarda said fearlessly; "Old Hekt, who lives over there in the black cave."

"The witch!" muttered Nebsecht. "But we will

let the leaves remain; if they do good, it is no matter where they came from."

"Hekt tasted the drops thou didst give her," said the old woman, "and agreed that they were good."

"Then we are satisfied with each other," answered Nebsecht, with a smile of amusement. "We will carry you now into the open air, little maid; for the air in here is as heavy as lead, and your damaged lung requires lighter nourishment."

"Yes, let me go out," said the girl. "It is well that thou hast not brought back the other with thee, who tormented me with his vows."

"You mean blind Teta," said Nebsecht, "he will not come again; but the young priest who soothed your father, when he repulsed the princess, will visit you. He is kindly disposed, and you should—you should—"

"Pentaur will come?" said the girl eagerly.

"Before midday. But how do you know his name?"

"I know him," said Uarda decidedly.

The surgeon looked at her surprised.

"You must not talk any more," he said, "for your cheeks are glowing, and the fever may return. We have arranged a tent for you, and now we will carry you into the open air."

"Not yet," said the girl. "Grandmother, do my hair for me, it is so heavy."

With these words she endeavored to part her mass of long reddish-brown hair with her slender hands, and to free it from the straws that had got entangled in it.

"Lie still," said the surgeon, in a warning voice.

"But it is so heavy," said the sick girl, smiling and

showing Nebsecht her abundant wealth of golden hair as if it were a fatiguing burden. "Come, grandmother, and help me."

The old woman leaned over the child, and combed her long locks carefully with a coarse comb made of grey horn, gently disengaged the straws from the golden tangle, and at last laid two thick long plaits on her granddaughter's shoulders.

Nebsecht knew that every movement of the wounded girl might do mischief, and his impulse was to stop the old woman's proceedings, but his tongue seemed spell-bound. Surprised, motionless, and with crimson cheeks, he stood opposite the girl, and his eyes followed every movement of her hands with anxious observation.

She did not notice him.

When the old woman laid down the comb Uarda drew a long breath.

"Grandmother," she said, "give me the mirror."

The old woman brought a shard of dimly glazed, baked clay. The girl turned to the light, contemplated the undefined reflection for a moment, and said:

"I have not seen a flower for so long, grandmother."

"Wait, child," she replied; she took from a jug the rose, which the princess had laid on the bosom of her grandchild, and offered it to her. Before Uarda could take it, the withered petals fell, and dropped upon her. The surgeon stooped, gathered them up, and put them into the child's hand.

"How good you are!" she said; "I am called Uarda—like this flower—and I love roses and the fresh air. Will you carry me out now?"

Nebsecht called the paraschites, who came into the hut with his son, and they carried the girl out into the air, and laid her under the humble tent they had contrived for her. The soldier's knees trembled while he held the light burden of his daughter's weight in his strong hands, and he sighed when he laid her down on the mat.

"How blue the sky is!" cried Uarda. "Ah! grandfather has watered my pomegranate, I thought so! and there come my doves! give me some corn in my hand, grandmother. How pleased they are."

The graceful birds, with black rings round their reddish-grey necks, flew confidingly to her, and took the corn that she playfully laid between her lips.

Nebsecht looked on with astonishment at this pretty play. He felt as if a new world had opened to him, and some new sense, hitherto unknown to him, had been revealed to him within his breast. He silently sat down in front of the hut, and drew the picture of a rose on the sand with a reed-stem that he picked up.

Perfect stillness was around him; the doves even had flown up, and settled on the roof. Presently the dog barked, steps approached; Uarda lifted herself up and said:

"Grandmother, it is the priest Pentaur."

"Who told you?" asked the old woman.

"I know it," answered the girl decidedly, and in a few moments a sonorous voice cried: "Good day to you. How is your invalid?"

Pentaur was soon standing by Uarda; pleased to hear Nebsecht's good report, and with the sweet face of the girl. He had some flowers in his hand, that a

happy maiden had laid on the altar of the Goddess Hathor, which he had served since the previous day, and he gave them to the sick girl, who took them with a blush, and held them between her clasped hands.

"The great Goddess whom I serve sends you these," said Pentaur, "and they will bring you healing. Continue to resemble them. You are pure and fair like them, and your course henceforth may be like theirs. As the sun gives life to the grey horizon, so you bring joy to this dark hut. Preserve your innocence, and wherever you go you will bring love, as flowers spring in every spot that is trodden by the golden foot of Hathor.* May her blessing rest upon you!"

He had spoken the last words half to the old couple and half to Uarda, and was already turning to depart when, behind a heap of dried reeds that lay close to the awning over the girl, the bitter cry of a child was heard, and a little boy came forward who held, as high as he could reach, a little cake, of which the dog, who seemed to know him well, had snatched half.

"How do you come here, Scherau?" the paraschites asked the weeping boy; the unfortunate child that Hekt was bringing up as a dwarf.

"I wanted," sobbed the little one, "to bring the cake to Uarda. She is ill—I had so much—"

"Poor child," said the paraschites, stroking the boy's hair; "there—give it to Uarda."

Scherau went up to the sick girl, knelt down by her, and whispered with streaming eyes:

"Take it! It is good, and very sweet, and if I get

* Hathor is frequently called "the golden," particularly at Dendera. She has much in common with the "golden Aphrodite."

another cake, and Hekt will let me out, I will bring it to you."

"Thank you, good little Scherau," said Uarda, kissing the child. Then she turned to Pentaur and said:

"For weeks he has had nothing but papyrus-pith,* and lotus-bread,* and now he brings me the cake which grandmother gave old Hekt yesterday."

The child blushed all over, and stammered:

"It is only half—but I did not touch it. Your dog bit out this piece, and this."

He touched the honey with the tip of his finger, and put it to his lips. "I was a long time behind the reeds there, for I did not like to come out because of the strangers there." He pointed to Nebsecht and Pentaur. "But now I must go home," he cried.

The child was going, but Pentaur stopped him, seized him, lifted him up in his arms and kissed him; saying, as he turned to Nebsecht:

"They were wise, who represented Horus—the symbol of the triumph of good over evil and of purity over the impure—in the form of a child. Bless you, my little friend; be good, and always give away what you have to make others happy. It will not make your house rich—but it will your heart!"

Scherau clung to the priest, and involuntarily raised

* According to Herodotus II. 92., Diodorus I. 80., Pliny XIII. 10. The Egyptians eat the lower part of the stem of the papyrus, at any rate the pith of it; by preference when it had been dried in the oven. Herodotus also tells us that "they pound the seeds of the lotus which resembles a poppy, and make bread of it." As we see from the monuments that enormous quantities of lotus plants grew on the banks of the Nile, the statement of Diodorus that a child, till it was grown up, cost its parents no more than 20 drachmæ—about 15 shillings—is quite credible. The papyrus has wholly disappeared from Egypt, but this is not the case with the lotus plant, which Dr. Rohrbach frequently found, and sent to Germany in 1856. At Damietta he saw peasants eat the roots of the white, and the seeds of the white and blue lotus.

his little hand to stroke Pentaur's cheek. An unknown tenderness had filled his little heart, and he felt as if he must throw his arms round the poet's neck and cry upon his breast.

But Pentaur set him down on the ground, and he trotted down into the valley. There he paused. The sun was high in the heavens, and he must return to the witch's cave and his board, but he would so much like to go a little farther—only as far as to the king's tomb, which was quite near.

Close by the door of this tomb was a thatch of palm-branches, and under this the sculptor Batau, a very aged man, was accustomed to rest. The old man was deaf, but he passed for the best artist of his time, and with justice; he had designed the beautiful pictures and hieroglyphic inscriptions in Seti's splendid buildings at Abydos and Thebes, as well as in the tomb of that prince, and he was now working at the decoration of the walls in the grave of Rameses.

Scherau had often crept close up to him, and thoughtfully watched him at work, and then tried himself to make animal and human figures out of a bit of clay.

One day the old man had observed him.

The sculptor had silently taken his humble attempt out of his hand, and had returned it to him with a smile of encouragement.

From that time a peculiar tie had sprung up between the two. Scherau would venture to sit down by the sculptor, and try to imitate his finished images. Not a word was exchanged between them, but often the deaf old man would destroy the boy's works, often on the contrary improve them with a touch of his

own hand, and not seldom nod at him to encourage him.

When he staid away the old man missed his pupil, and Scherau's happiest hours were those which he passed at his side.

He was not forbidden to take some clay home with him. There, when the old woman's back was turned, he moulded a variety of images which he destroyed as soon as they were finished.

While he lay on his rack his hands were left free, and he tried to reproduce the various forms which lived in his imagination, he forgot the present in his artistic attempts, and his bitter lot acquired a flavor of the sweetest enjoyment.

But to-day it was too late; he must give up his visit to the tomb of Rameses.

Once more he looked back at the hut, and then hurried into the dark cave.

CHAPTER XIV.

PENTAUR also soon quitted the hut of the paraschites.

Lost in meditation, he went along the hill-path which led to the temple* which Ameni had put under his direction.

He foresaw many disturbed and anxious hours in the immediate future.

The sanctuary of which he was the superior, had been

* This temple is well proportioned, and remains in good preservation. Copies of the interesting pictures discovered in it are to be found in the "Fleet of an Egyptian queen" by Dumichen. Other details may be found in Lepsius' Monuments of Egypt, and a plan of the place has recently been published by Mariette.

dedicated to her own memory, and to the goddess Hathor, by Hatasu,* a great queen of the dethroned dynasty.

The priests who served it were endowed with peculiar chartered privileges, which hitherto had been strictly respected. Their dignity was hereditary, going down from father to son, and they had the right of choosing their director from among themselves.

Now their chief priest Rui was ill and dying, and Ameni, under whose jurisdiction they came, had, without consulting them, sent the young poet Pentaur to fill his place.

They had received the intruder most unwillingly, and combined strongly against him when it became evident that he was disposed to establish a severe rule and to abolish many abuses which had become established customs.

They had devolved the greeting of the rising sun on the temple-servants; Pentaur required that the younger ones at least should take part in chanting the morning hymn, and himself led the choir. They had trafficked with the offerings laid on the altar of the Goddess; the new master repressed this abuse, as well as the extortions of which they were guilty towards women in sorrow, who visited the temple of Hathor in greater number than any other sanctuary.

The poet—brought up in the temple of Seti to self-control, order, exactitude, and decent customs, deeply penetrated with a sense of the dignity of his position, and accustomed to struggle with special zeal against

* The daughter of Thotmes I., wife of her brother Thotmes II., and predecessor of her second brother Thotmes III. An energetic woman who executed great works, and caused herself to be represented with the helmet and beard-case of a man.

indolence of body and spirit—was disgusted with the slothful life and fraudulent dealings of his subordinates; and the deeper insight which yesterday's experience had given him into the poverty and sorrow of human existence, made him resolve with increased warmth that he would awake them to a new life.

The conviction that the lazy herd whom he commanded was called upon to pour consolation into a thousand sorrowing hearts, to dry innumerable tears, and to clothe the dry sticks of despair with the fresh verdure of hope, urged him to strong measures.

Yesterday he had seen how, with calm indifference, they had listened to the deserted wife, the betrayed maiden, to the woman, who implored the withheld blessing of children, to the anxious mother, the forlorn widow,—and sought only to take advantage of sorrow, to extort gifts for the Goddess, or better still for their own pockets or belly.

Now he was nearing the scene of his new labors.

There stood the reverend building, rising stately from the valley on four terraces handsomely and singularly divided, and resting on the western side against the high amphitheatre of yellow cliffs.

On the closely-joined foundation stones gigantic hawks were carved in relief, each with the emblem of life, and symbolized Horus, the son of the Goddess, who brings all that fades to fresh bloom, and all that dies to resurrection.

On each terrace stood a hall open to the east, and supported on two and twenty archaic* pillars. On their

* Polygonal pillars, which were used first in tomb-building under the 12th dynasty, and after the expulsion of the Hyksos under the kings of the 17th and 18th, in public buildings; but under the subsequent races of kings they ceased to be employed.

inner walls elegant pictures and inscriptions in the finest sculptured work recorded, for the benefit of posterity, the great things that Hatasu had done with the help of the Gods of Thebes.

There were the ships which she had to send to Punt* to enrich Egypt with the treasures of the east; there the wonders brought to Thebes from Arabia might be seen; there were delineated the houses** of the inhabitants of the land of frankincense, and all the fishes of the Red Sea, in distinct and characteristic outline.***

On the third and fourth terraces were the small adjoining rooms of Hatasu and her brothers Thotmes II. and III., which were built against the rock, and entered by granite doorways. In them purifications were accomplished, the images of the Goddess worshipped, and the more distinguished worshippers admitted to confess. The sacred cows of the Goddess were kept in a side-building.

As Pentaur approached the great gate of the terrace-temple, he became the witness of a scene which filled him with resentment.

A woman implored to be admitted into the forecourt, to pray at the altar of the Goddess for her husband, who was very ill, but the sleek gate-keeper drove her back with rough words.

"It is written up," said he, pointing to the inscrip-

* Arabia; apparently also the coast of east Africa south of Egypt as far as Somali. The latest of the lists published by Mariette, of the southern nations conquered by Thotmes III., mentions it. This list was found on the pylon of the temple of Karnak.

** They stood on piles and were entered by ladders.

*** The species are in many cases distinguishable—Dr. Dönitz has named several.

tion over the gate, "only the purified may set their foot across this threshold, and you cannot be purified but by the smoke of incense."

"Then swing the censer for me," said the woman, "and take this silver ring—it is all I have."

"A silver ring!" cried the porter, indignantly. "Shall the goddess be impoverished for your sake! The grains of Anta,* that would be used in purifying you, would cost ten times as much."

"But I have no more," replied the woman, "my husband, for whom I come to pray, is ill; he cannot work, and my children—"

"You fatten them up and deprive the goddess of her due," cried the gate-keeper. "Three rings down, or I shut the gate."

"Be merciful," said the woman, weeping. "What will become of us if Hathor does not help my husband?"

"Will our goddess fetch the doctor?" asked the porter. "She has something to do besides curing sick starvelings. Besides, that is not her office. Go to Imhotep** or to Chunsu the counsellor,*** or to the great Techuti herself, who helps the sick. There is no quack medicine to be got here."

* An incense frequently mentioned.

** The son of Ptah, named Asklepios by the Greeks. Memphis was the chief city of his worship; he is usually represented with a cap on, and a book on his knee. There are fine statues of him at Berlin, the Louvre, and other museums. A bronze of great beauty is in the possession of Pastor Haken at Riga.

*** The third of the Triad of Thebes; he is identical with Toth, and frequently addressed as of good counsel for the healing of the sick. His great Temple in Thebes (Karnak) is well preserved. In the time of the 20th dynasty A. C. 1273 to 1095, his statue (according to a passage interpreted by E. de Rongé) was sent into Asia to cure the sister of the wife of Rameses XII., an Asiatic princess, who was possessed by devils.

"I only want comfort in my trouble," said the woman.

"Comfort!" laughed the gate-keeper, measuring the comely young woman with his eye. "That you may have cheaper."

The woman turned pale, and drew back from the hand the man stretched out towards her.

At this moment Pentaur, full of wrath, stepped between them.

He raised his hand in blessing over the woman, who bent low before him, and said, "Whoever calls fervently on the Divinity is near to him. You are pure. Enter."

As soon as she had disappeared within the temple, the priest turned to the gate-keeper and exclaimed:

"Is this how you serve the goddess, is this how you take advantage of a heart-wrung woman? Give me the keys of this gate. Your office is taken from you, and early to-morrow you go out in the fields, and keep the geese of Hathor."

The porter threw himself on his knees with loud outcries; but Pentaur turned his back upon him, entered the sanctuary, and mounted the steps which led to his dwelling on the third terrace.

A few priests whom he passed turned their backs upon him, others looked down at their dinners, eating noisily, and making as if they did not see him. They had combined strongly, and were determined to expel the inconvenient intruder at any price.

Having reached his room, which had been splendidly decorated for his predecessor, Pentaur laid aside his new insignia, comparing sorrowfully the past and the present.

To what an exchange Ameni had condemned him!

Here, wherever he looked, he met with sulkiness and aversion; while, when he walked through the courts of the House of Seti, a hundred boys would hurry towards him, and cling affectionately to his robe. Honored there by great and small, his every word had had its value; and when each day he gave utterance to his thoughts, what he bestowed came back to him refined by earnest discourse with his associates and superiors, and he gained new treasures for his inner life.

"What is rare," thought he, "is full of charm; and yet how hard it is to do without what is habitual!"

The occurrences of the last few days passed before his mental sight. Bent-Anat's image appeared before him, and took a more and more distinct and captivating form. His heart began to beat wildly, the blood rushed faster through his veins; he hid his face in his hands, and recalled every glance, every word from her lips.

"I follow thee willingly," she had said to him before the hut of the paraschites. Now he asked himself whether he were worthy of such a follower.

He had indeed broken through the old bonds, but not to disgrace the house that was dear to him, only to let new light into its dim chambers.

"To do what we have earnestly felt to be right," said he to himself, "may seem worthy of punishment to men, but cannot before God."

He sighed and walked out into the terrace in a mood of lofty excitement, and fully resolved to do here nothing but what was right, to lay the foundation of all that was good.

"We men," thought he, "prepare sorrow when we come into the world, and lamentation when we leave it;

and so it is our duty in the intermediate time to fight with suffering, and to sow the seeds of joy. There are many tears here to be wiped away. To work then!"

The poet found none of his subordinates on the upper terrace. They had all met in the forecourt of the temple, and were listening to the gate-keeper's tale, and seemed to sympathize with his angry complaint—against whom Pentaur well knew.

With a firm step he went towards them and said:

"I have expelled this man from among us, for he is a disgrace to us. To-morrow he quits the temple."

"I will go at once," replied the gate-keeper defiantly, "and in behalf of the holy fathers (here he cast a significant glance at the priests), ask the high-priest Ameni if the unclean are henceforth to be permitted to enter this sanctuary."

He was already approaching the gate, but Pentaur stepped before him, saying resolutely:

"You will remain here and keep the geese to-morrow, day after to-morrow, and until I choose to pardon you."

The gate-keeper looked enquiringly at the priests.

Not one moved.

"Go back into your house," said Pentaur, going closer to him.

The porter obeyed.

Pentaur locked the door of the little room, gave the key to one of the temple-servants, and said: "Perform his duty, watch the man, and if he escapes you will go after the geese to-morrow too. See, my friends, how many worshippers kneel there before our altars—go and fulfil your office. I will wait in the confessional to receive complaints, and to administer comfort."

The priests separated and went to the votaries.

Pentaur once more mounted the steps, and sat down in the narrow confessional which was closed by a curtain; on its wall the picture of Hatasu was to be seen, drawing the milk of eternal life from the udders of the cow Hathor.*

He had hardly taken his place when a temple-servant** announced the arrival of a veiled lady. The bearers of her litter were thickly veiled, and she had requested to be conducted to the confession chamber. The servant handed Pentaur a token by which the high-priest of the great temple of Amon, on the other bank of the Nile, granted her the privilege of entering the inner rooms of the temple with the Rechiu,*** and to communicate with all priests, even with the highest of the initiated.

The poet withdrew behind a curtain, and awaited the stranger with a disquiet that seemed to him all the more singular that he had frequently found himself in a similar position. Even the noblest dignitaries had often been transferred to him by Ameni when they had come to the temple to have their visions interpreted.

A tall female figure entered the still, sultry stone room, sank on her knees, and put up a long and absorbed prayer before the figure of Hathor. Pentaur also, seen by no one, lifted his hands, and fervently addressed himself to the omnipresent spirit with a prayer for strength and purity.

Just as his arms fell the lady raised her head. It was as though the prayers of the two souls had united to mount upwards together.

The veiled lady rose and dropped her veil.

* A remarkably life-like figure in relief, in perfect preservation.

** The Neokori were the lowest order of the priesthood; even the temple-servants belonged to it.

*** Egyptians, who were admitted to the innermost chambers and the highest grades of learning.

It was Bent-Anat.

In the agitation of her soul she had sought the goddess Hathor, who guides the beating heart of woman and spins the threads which bind man and wife.

"High mistress of heaven! many-named and beautiful!" she began to pray aloud, "golden Hathor! who knowest grief and ecstasy—the present and the future—draw near to thy child, and guide the spirit of thy servant, that he may advise me well. I am the daughter of a father who is great and noble and truthful as one of the Gods. He advises me—he will never compel me—to yield to a man whom I can never love. Nay, another has met me, humble in birth but noble in spirit and in gifts—"

Thus far, Pentaur, incapable of speech, had overheard the princess.

Ought he to remain concealed and hear all her secret, or should he step forth and show himself to her? His pride called loudly to him: "Now she will speak your name; you are the chosen one of the fairest and noblest." But another voice to which he had accustomed himself to listen in severe self-discipline made itself heard, and said—"Let her say nothing in ignorance, that she need be ashamed of if she knew."

He blushed for her;—he opened the curtain and went forward into the presence of Bent-Anat.

The Princess drew back startled.

"Art thou Pentaur," she asked, "or one of the Immortals?"

"I am Pentaur," he answered firmly, "a man with all the weakness of his race, but with a desire for

what is good. Linger here and pour out thy soul to our Goddess; my whole life shall be a prayer for thee."

The poet looked full at her; then he turned quickly, as if to avoid a danger, towards the door of the confessional.

Bent-Anat called his name, and he stayed his steps.

"The daughter of Rameses," she said, "need offer no justification of her appearance here, but the maiden Bent-Anat," and she colored as she spoke, "expected to find, not thee, but the old priest Rui, and she desired his advice. Now leave me to pray."

Bent-Anat sank on her knees, and Pentaur went out into the open air.

When the princess too had left the confessional, loud voices were heard on the south side of the terrace on which they stood.

She hastened towards the parapet.

"Hail to Pentaur!" was shouted up from below.

The poet rushed forward, and placed himself near the princess. Both looked down into the valley, and could be seen by all.

"Hail, hail! Pentaur," was called doubly loud, "Hail to our teacher! come back to the House of Seti. Down with the persecutors of Pentaur—down with our oppressors!"

At the head of the youths, who, so soon as they had found out whither the poet had been exiled, had escaped to tell him that they were faithful to him, stood the prince Rameri, who nodded triumphantly to his sister, and Anana stepped forward to inform the

honored teacher in a solemn and well-studied speech, that, in the event of Ameni refusing to recall him, they had decided requesting their fathers to place them at another school.

The young sage spoke well, and Bent-Anat followed his words, not without approbation; but Pentaur's face grew darker, and before his favorite disciple had ended his speech he interrupted him sternly.

His voice was at first reproachful, and then complaining, and, loud as he spoke, only sorrow rang in his tones, and not anger.

"In truth," he concluded, "every word that I have spoken to you I could but find it in me to regret, if it has contributed to encourage you to this mad act. You were born in palaces; learn to obey, that later you may know how to command. Back to your school! You hesitate? Then I will come out against you with the watchman, and drive you back, for you do me and yourselves small honor by such a proof of affection. Go back to the school you belong to."

The school-boys dared make no answer, but surprised and disenchanted turned to go home.

Bent-Anat cast down her eyes as she met those of her brother, who shrugged his shoulders, and then she looked half shyly, half respectfully, at the poet; but soon again her eyes turned to the plain below, for thick dust-clouds whirled across it, the sound of hoofs and the rattle of wheels became audible, and at the same moment the chariot of Septah, the chief haruspex, and a vehicle with the heavily-armed guard of the House of Seti, stopped near the terrace.

The angry old man sprang quickly to the ground,

called the host of escaped pupils to him in a stern voice, ordered the guard to drive them back to the school, and hurried up to the temple gates like a vigorous youth. The priests received him with the deepest reverence, and at once laid their complaints before him.

He heard them willingly, but did not let them discuss the matter; then, though with some difficulty, he quickly mounted the steps, down which Bent-Anat came towards him.

The princess felt that she would divert all the blame and misunderstanding to herself, if Septah recognized her; her hand involuntarily reached for her veil, but she drew it back quickly, looked with quiet dignity into the old man's eyes, which flashed with anger, and proudly passed by him. The haruspex bowed, but without giving her his blessing, and when he met Pentaur on the second terrace, ordered that the temple should be cleared of worshippers.

This was done in a few minutes, and the priests were witnesses of the most painful scene which had occurred for years in their quiet sanctuary.

The head of the haruspices of the House of Seti was the most determined adversary of the poet who had so early been initiated into the mysteries, and whose keen intellect often shook those very ramparts which the zealous old man had, from conviction, labored to strengthen from his youth up. The vexatious occurrences, of which he had been a witness at the House of Seti, and here also but a few minutes since, he regarded as the consequence of the unbridled license of an ill-regulated imagination, and in stern lan-

guage he called Pentaur to account for the "revolt" of the school-boys.

"And besides our boys," he exclaimed, "you have led the daughter of Rameses astray. She was not yet purged of her uncleanness, and yet you tempt her to an assignation, not even in the stranger's quarters—but in the holy house of this pure Divinity."

Undeserved praise is dangerous to the weak; unjust blame may turn even the strong from the right way.

Pentaur indignantly repelled the accusations of the old man, called them unworthy of his age, his position, and his name, and for fear that his anger might carry him too far, turned his back upon him; but the haruspex ordered him to remain, and in his presence questioned the priests, who unanimously accused the poet of having admitted to the temple another unpurified woman besides Bent-Anat, and of having expelled the gate-keeper and thrown him into prison for opposing the crime.

The haruspex ordered that the "ill-used man" should be set at liberty.

Pentaur resisted this command, asserted his right to govern in this temple, and with a trembling voice requested Septah to quit the place.

The haruspex showed him Ameni's ring, by which, during his residence in Thebes, he made him his plenipotentiary, degraded Pentaur from his dignity, but ordered him not to quit the sanctuary till further notice, and then finally departed from the temple of Hatasu.

Pentaur had yielded in silence to the signet of his chief, and returned to the confessional in which he had met Bent-Anat. He felt his soul shaken to its very foundations, his thoughts were confused, his feel-

ings struggling with each other; he shivered, and when he heard the laughter of the priests and the gate-keeper, who were triumphing in their easy victory, he started and shuddered like a man who in passing a mirror should see a brand of disgrace on his brow.

But by degrees he recovered himself, his spirit grew clearer, and when he left the little room to look towards the east—where, on the farther shore, rose the palace where Bent-Anat must be—a deep contempt for his enemies filled his soul, and a proud feeling of renewed manly energy. He did not conceal from himself that he had enemies; that a time of struggle was beginning for him; but he looked forward to it like a young hero to the morning of his first battle.

CHAPTER XV.

The afternoon shadows were already growing long, when a splendid chariot drew up to the gates of the terrace-temple. Paaker, the chief pioneer, stood up in it, driving his handsome and fiery Syrian horses. Behind him stood an Ethiopian slave, and his big dog followed the swift team with his tongue out.

As he approached the temple he heard himself called, and checked the pace of his horses. A tiny man hurried up to him, and, as soon as he had recognized in him the dwarf Nemu, he cried angrily:

"Is it for you, you rascal, that I stop my drive? What do you want?"

"To crave," said the little man, bowing humbly, "that, when thy business in the city of the dead is finished, thou wilt carry me back to Thebes."

"You are Mena's dwarf?" asked the pioneer.

"By no means," replied Nemu. "I belong to his neglected wife, the lady Nefert. I can only cover the road very slowly with my little legs, while the hoofs of your horses devour the way—as a crocodile does his prey."

"Get up!" said Paaker. "Did you come here on foot?"

"No, my lord," replied Nemu, "on an ass; but a demon entered into the beast, and has struck it with sickness. I had to leave it on the road. The beasts of Anubis will have a better supper than we to-night."

"Things are not done handsomely then at your mistress's house?" asked Paaker.

"We still have bread," replied Nemu, "and the Nile is full of water. Much meat is not necessary for women and dwarfs, but our last cattle take a form which is too hard for human teeth."

The pioneer did not understand the joke, and looked enquiringly at the dwarf.

"The form of money," said the little man, "and that cannot be chewed; soon that will be gone too, and then the point will be to find a recipe for making nutritious cakes out of earth, water, and palm-leaves. It makes very little difference to me, a dwarf does not need much—but the poor tender lady!"

Paaker touched his horses with such a violent stroke of his whip that they reared high, and it took all his strength to control their spirit.

"The horses' jaws will be broken," muttered the slave behind. "What a shame with such fine beasts!"

"Have you to pay for them?" growled Paaker. Then he turned again to the dwarf, and asked—

"Why does Mena let the ladies want?"

"He no longer cares for his wife," replied the dwarf, casting his eyes down sadly. "At the last division of the spoil he passed by the gold and silver, and took a foreign woman into his tent. Evil demons have blinded him, for where is there a woman fairer than Nefert?"

"You love your mistress."

"As my very eyes!"

During this conversation they had arrived at the terrace-temple. Paaker threw the reins to the slave, ordered him to wait with Nemu, and turned to the gate-keeper to explain to him, with the help of a handful of gold, his desire of being conducted to Pentaur, the chief of the temple.

The gate-keeper, swinging a censer before him with a hasty action, admitted him into the sanctuary.

"You will find him on the third terrace," he said, "but he is no longer our superior."

"They said so in the temple of Seti, whence I have just come," replied Paaker.

The porter shrugged his shoulders with a sneer, and said: "The palm-tree that is quickly set up falls down more quickly still." Then he desired a servant to conduct the stranger to Pentaur.

The poet recognized the Mohar at once, asked his will, and learned that he was come to have a wonderful vision interpreted by him.

Paaker explained before relating his dream, that he did not ask this service for nothing; and when the priest's countenance darkened he added:

"I will send a fine beast for sacrifice to the Goddess if the interpretation is favorable."

"And in the opposite case?" asked Pentaur, who, in the House of Seti, never would have anything whatever to do with the payments of the worshippers or the offerings of the devout.

"I will offer a sheep," replied Paaker, who did not perceive the subtle irony that lurked in Pentaur's words, and who was accustomed to pay for the gifts of the Divinity in proportion to their value to himself.

Pentaur thought of the verdict which Gagabu, only two evenings since, had passed on the Mohar, and it occurred to him that he would test how far the man's superstition would lead him. So he asked, while he suppressed a smile:

"And if I can foretell nothing bad, but also nothing actually good?"—

"An antelope, and four geese," answered Paaker promptly.

"But if I were altogether disinclined to put myself at your service?" asked Pentaur. "If I thought it unworthy of a priest to let the Gods be paid in proportion to their favors towards a particular person, like corrupt officials; if I now showed you—you—and I have known you from a school-boy, that there are things that cannot be bought with inherited wealth?"

The pioneer drew back astonished and angry, but Pentaur continued calmly—

"I stand here as the minister of the Divinity; and nevertheless, I see by your countenance, that you were on the point of lowering yourself by showing to me your violent and extortionate spirit.

"The Immortals send us dreams, not to give us a foretaste of joy or caution us against danger, but to remind us so to prepare our souls that we may submit

quietly to suffer evil, and with heartfelt gratitude accept the good; and so gain from each profit for the inner life. I will not interpret your dream! Come without gifts, but with a humble heart, and with longing for inward purification, and I will pray to the Gods that they may enlighten me, and give you such interpretation of even evil dreams that they may be fruitful in blessing.

Leave me, and quit the temple!"

Paaker ground his teeth with rage; but he controlled himself, and only said as he slowly withdrew:

"If your office had not already been taken from you, the insolence with which you have dismissed me might have cost you your place. We shall meet again, and then you shall learn that inherited wealth in the right hand is worth more than you will like."

"Another enemy!" thought the poet, when he found himself alone and stood erect in the glad consciousness of having done right.

During Paaker's interview with the poet, the dwarf Nemu had chatted to the porter, and had learned from him all that had previously occurred.

Paaker mounted his chariot pale with rage, and whipped on his horses before the dwarf had clambered up the step; but the slave seized the little man, and set him carefully on his feet behind his master.

"The villian, the scoundrel! he shall repent it—Pentaur is he called! the hound!" muttered the pioneer to himself.

The dwarf lost none of his words, and when he caught the name of Pentaur he called to the pioneer, and said—

"They have appointed a scoundrel to be the superior of this temple; his name is Pentaur. He was expelled from the temple of Seti for his immorality, and now he has stirred up the younger scholars to rebellion, and invited unclean women into the temple. My lips hardly dare repeat it, but the gate-keeper swore it was true—that the chief haruspex from the House of Seti found him in conference with Bent-Anat, the king's daughter, and at once deprived him of his office."

"With Bent-Anat?" replied the pioneer, and muttered, before the dwarf could find time to answer, "Indeed, with Bent-Anat!" and he recalled the day before yesterday, when the princess had remained so long with the priest in the hovel of the paraschites, while he had talked to Nefert and visited the old witch.

"I should not care to be in the priest's skin," observed Nemu, "for though Rameses is far away, the Regent Ani is near enough. He is a gentleman who seldom pounces, but even the dove won't allow itself to be attacked in its own nest."

Paaker looked enquiringly at Nemu.

"I know," said the dwarf, "Ani has asked Rameses' consent to marry his daughter."

"He has already asked it," continued the dwarf as Paaker smiled incredulously, "and the king is not disinclined to give it. He likes making marriages—as thou must know pretty well."

"I?" said Paaker, surprised.

"He forced Katuti to give her daughter as wife to the charioteer. That I know from herself. She can prove it to thee."

Paaker shook his head in denial, but the dwarf continued eagerly, "Yes, yes! Katuti would have had thee

for her son-in-law, and it was the king, not she, who broke off the betrothal. Thou must at the same time have been inscribed in the black books of the 'high gate,' for Rameses used many hard names for thee. One of us is like a mouse behind the curtain, which knows a good deal."

Paaker suddenly brought his horses to a stand-still, threw the reins to the slave, sprang from the chariot, called the dwarf to his side, and said:

"We will walk from here to the river, and you shall tell me all you know; but if an untrue word passes your lips I will have you eaten by my dogs."

"I know thou canst keep thy word," gasped the little man. "But go a little slower if thou wilt, for I am quite out of breath. Let Katuti herself tell thee how it all came about. Rameses compelled her to give her daughter to the charioteer. I do not know what he said of thee, but it was not complimentary. My poor mistress! she let herself be caught by the dandy, the ladies' man—and now she may weep and wail. When I pass the great gates of thy house with Katuti, she often sighs and complains bitterly. And with good reason, for it soon will be all over with our noble estate, and we must seek an asylum far away among the Amu* in the low lands; for the nobles will soon avoid us as outcasts. Thou mayst be glad that thou hast not linked thy fate to ours; but I have a faithful heart, and will share my mistress's trouble."

"You speak riddles," said Paaker, "what have they to fear?"

* A Semitic tribe, who at the time of our story peopled the eastern delta. See "Ægypten und die Bücher Moses," Ebers, and the second edition of "Histoire de l'Egypte" by Brugsch. The name Bi-amites comes from the old name Amu.

The dwarf now related how Nefert's brother had gambled away the mummy of his father, how enormous was the sum he had lost, and that degradation must overtake Katuti, and her daughter with her.

"Who can save them," he whimpered. "Her shameless husband squanders his inheritance and his prize-money. Katuti is poor, and the little words "Give me!' scare away friends as the cry of a hawk scares the chickens. My poor mistress!"

"It is a large sum," muttered Paaker to himself.

"It is enormous!" sighed the dwarf, "and where is it to be found in these hard times? It would have been different with us, if—ah if—. And it would be a form of madness which I do not believe in, that Nefert should still care for her braggart husband. She thinks as much of thee as of him."

Paaker looked at the dwarf half incredulous and half threatening.

"Ay—of thee," repeated Nemu. "Since our excursion to the Necropolis—the day before yesterday it was—she speaks only of thee, praising thy ability, and thy strong manly spirit. It is as if some charm obliged her to think of thee."

The pioneer began to walk so fast that his small companion once more had to ask him to moderate his steps.

They gained the shore in silence, where Paaker's boat was waiting, which also conveyed his chariot. He lay down in the little cabin, called the dwarf to him, and said:

"I am Katuti's nearest relative; we are now reconciled; why does she not turn to me in her difficulty?"

"Because she is proud, and thy blood flows in her

veins. Sooner would she die with her child—she said so —than ask thee, against whom she sinned, for an alms."

"She did think of me then?"

"At once; nor did she doubt thy generosity. She esteems thee highly—I repeat it; and if an arrow from a Cheta's bow or a visitation of the Gods attained Mena, she would joyfully place her child in thine arms, and Nefert believe me has not forgotten her playfellow. The day before yesterday, when she came home from the Necropolis, and before the letter had come from the camp, she was full of thee*—nay called to thee in her dreams; I know it from Kandake, her black maid."

The pioneer looked down and said:

"How extraordinary! and the same night I had a vision in which your mistress appeared to me; the insolent priest in the temple of Hathor should have interpreted it to me."

"And he refused? the fool! but other folks understand dreams, and I am not the worst of them—Ask thy servant. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred my interpretations come true. How was the vision?"

"I stood by the Nile," said Paaker, casting down his eyes and drawing lines with his whip through the wool of the cabin rug. "The water was still, and I saw Nefert standing on the farther bank, and beckoning to me. I called to her, and she stepped on the water, which bore her up as if it were this carpet. She went over the water dry-foot as if it were the stony wilderness. A wonderful sight! She came nearer to me, and nearer, and already I had tried to take her hand, when she ducked under like a swan. I went into the

* "To be full (meh) of any one" is used in the Egyptian language for "to be in love with any one."

water to seize her, and when she came up again I clasped her in my arms; but then the strangest thing happened—she flowed away, she dissolved like the snow on the Syrian hills, when you take it in your hand, and yet it was not the same, for her hair turned to water-lilies, and her eyes to blue fishes that swam away merrily, and her lips to twigs of coral that sank at once, and from her body grew a crocodile, with a head like Mena, that laughed and gnashed its teeth at me. Then I was seized with blind fury; I threw myself upon him with a drawn sword, he fastened his teeth in my flesh, I pierced his throat with my weapon; the Nile was dark with our streaming blood, and so we fought and fought—it lasted an eternity—till I awoke."

Paaker drew a deep breath as he ceased speaking; as if his wild dream tormented him again.

The dwarf had listened with eager attention, but several minutes passed before he spoke.

"A strange dream," he said, "but the interpretation as to the future is not hard to find. Nefert is striving to reach thee, she longs to be thine, but if thou dost fancy that she is already in thy grasp she will elude thee; thy hopes will melt like ice, slip away like sand, if thou dost not know how to put the crocodile out of the way."

At this moment the boat struck the landing-place. The pioneer started up, and cried, "We have reached the end!"

"We have reached the end," echoed the little man with meaning. "There is only a narrow bridge to step over."

When they both stood on the shore, the dwarf said,

"I have to thank thee for thy hospitality, and when I can serve thee command me."

"Come here," cried the pioneer, and drew Nemu away with him under the shade of a sycamore veiled in the half light of the departing sun.

"What do you mean by a bridge which we must step over? I do not understand the flowers of speech, and desire plain language."

The dwarf reflected for a moment, and then asked—

"Shall I say nakedly and openly what I mean, and will you not be angry?"

"Speak!"

"Mena is the crocodile. Put him out of the world, and you will have passed the bridge; then Nefert will be thine—if thou wilt listen to me."

"What shall I do?"

"Put the charioteer out of the world."

Paaker's gesture seemed to convey that that was a thing that had long been decided on, and he turned his face, for a good omen, so that the rising moon should be on his right hand.

The dwarf went on.

"Secure Nefert, so that she may not vanish like her image in the dream, before you reach the goal; that is to say, ransom the honor of your future mother and wife, for how could you take an outcast into your house?"

Paaker looked thoughtfully at the ground.

"May I inform my mistress that thou wilt save her?" asked Nemu. "I may?—Then all will be well, for he who will devote a fortune to love will not hesitate to devote a reed lance with a brass point to it to his love and his hatred together."

CHAPTER XVI.

The sun had set, and darkness covered the City of the Dead; but the moon shone above the valley of the kings' tombs, and the projecting masses of the rocky walls of the chasm threw sharply-defined shadows. A weird silence lay upon the desert, where yet far more life was stirring than in the noonday hour, for now bats darted like black silken threads through the night air, owls hovered aloft on wide-spread wings, small troops of jackals slipped by, one following the other up the mountain slopes. From time to time their hideous yell, or the whining laugh of the hyena, broke the stillness of the night.

Nor was human life yet at rest in the valley of tombs. A faint light glimmered in the cave of the sorceress Hekt, and in front of the paraschites' hut a fire was burning, which the grandmother of the sick Uarda now and then fed with pieces of dry manure. Two men were seated in front of the hut, and gazed in silence on the thin flame, whose impure light was almost quenched by the clearer glow of the moon; whilst the third, Uarda's father, disembowelled a large ram, whose head he had already cut off.

"How the jackals howl!" said the old paraschites, drawing as he spoke the torn brown cotton cloth, which he had put on as a protection against the night air and the dew, closer round his bare shoulders.

"They scent the fresh meat" answered the physician,

Nebsecht. "Throw them the entrails, when you have done; the legs and back you can roast. Be careful how you cut out the heart—the heart, soldier. There it is! What a great beast."

Nebsecht took the ram's heart in his hand, and gazed at it with the deepest attention, whilst the old paraschites watched him anxiously. At length:

"I promised," he said, "to do for you what you wish, if you restore the little one to health; but you ask for what is impossible."

"Impossible?" said the physician, "why, impossible? You open the corpses, you go in and out of the house of the embalmer. Get possession of one of the canopi,* lay this heart in it, and take out in its stead the heart of a human being. No one—no one will notice it. Nor need you do it to-morrow, or the day after to-morrow even. Your son can buy a ram to kill every day with my money till the right moment comes. Your granddaughter will soon grow strong on a good meat-diet. Take courage!"

"I am not afraid of the danger," said the old man, "but how can I venture to steal from a dead man his life in the other world? And then—in shame and misery have I lived, and for many a year—no man has numbered them for me—have I obeyed the commandments, that I may be found righteous in that world to

* Vases of clay, limestone, or alabaster, which were used for the preservation of the intestines of the embalmed Egyptians, and represented the four genii of death, Amset, Hapi, Tuamutef, and Khebsennuf. Instead of the cover, the head of the genius to which it was dedicated, was placed on each kanopus. Amset (under the protection of Isis) has a human head, Hapi (protected by Nephthys) an ape's head, Tuamutef (protected by Neith) a jackal's head, and Khebsennuf (protected by Selk) a sparrow-hawk's head. In one of the Christian Coptic Manuscripts, the four archangels are invoked in the place of these genii.

come, and in the fields of Aalu, and in the Sun-bark find compensation for all that I have suffered here. You are good and friendly. Why, for the sake of a whim, should you sacrifice the future bliss of a man, who in all his long life has never known happiness, and who has never done you any harm?"

"What I want with the heart," replied the physician, "you cannot understand, but in procuring it for me, you will be furthering a great and useful purpose. I have no whims, for I am no idler. And as to what concerns your salvation, have no anxiety. I am a priest, and take your deed and its consequences upon myself; upon myself, do you understand? I tell you, as a priest, that what I demand of you is right, and if the judge of the dead shall enquire, 'Why didst thou take the heart of a human being out of the Kanopus?' then reply—reply to him thus, 'Because Nebsecht, the priest, commanded me, and promised himself to answer for the deed.'"

The old man gazed thoughtfully on the ground, and the physician continued still more urgently:

"If you fulfil my wish, then—then I swear to you that, when you die, I will take care that your mummy is provided with all the amulets, and I myself will write you a book of the Entrance into Day,* and have it wound within your mummy-cloth, as is done with the great.** That will give you power over all demons, and you will be admitted to the hall of the twofold justice, which punishes and rewards, and your award will be bliss."

* The first section of the so-called Book of the Dead is thus entitled. The commencement: Ha em re'em per em hru, led the Greeks to speak of a book of the Egyptians, called "The Holy Ambres."

** The Books of the Dead are often found amongst the cloths, (by the leg or under the arm), or else in the coffin under, or near, the mummy.

"But the theft of a heart will make the weight of my sins heavy, when my own heart is weighed," sighed the old man.

Nebsecht considered for a moment, and then said: "I will give you a written paper, in which I will certify that it was I who commanded the theft. You will sew it up in a little bag, carry it on your breast, and have it laid with you in the grave. Then when Techuti, the agent of the soul, receives your justification before Osiris and the judges of the dead,* give him the writing. He will read it aloud, and you will be accounted just."

"I am not learned in writing," muttered the paraschites with a slight mistrust that made itself felt in his voice.

"But I swear to you by the nine great Gods, that I will write nothing on the paper but what I have promised you. I will confess that I, the priest Nebsecht, commanded you to take the heart, and that your guilt is mine."

"Let me have the writing then," murmured the old man.

The physician wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and gave the paraschites his hand. "To-morrow you shall have it," he said, "and I will not leave your granddaughter till she is well again."

* The vignettes of Chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead represent the Last Judgment of the Egyptians. Under a canopy Osiris sits enthroned as Chief Judge, 42 assessors assist him. In the hall stand the scales; the dog-headed ape, the animal sacred to Toth, guides the balance. In one scale lies the heart of the dead man, in the other the image of the goddess of Truth, who introduces the soul into the hall of justice Toth writes the record. The soul affirms that it has not committed 42 deadly sins, and if it obtains credit, it is named "maa cheru," *i. e.*, "the truth-speaker," and is therewith declared blessed. It now receives its heart back, and grows into a new and divine life.

The soldier engaged in cutting up the ram, had heard nothing of this conversation. Now he ran a wooden spit through the legs, and held them over the fire to roast them. The jackals howled louder as the smell of the melting fat filled the air, and the old man, as he looked on, forgot the terrible task he had undertaken. For a year past, no meat had been tasted in his house.

The physician Nebsecht, himself eating nothing but a piece of bread, looked on at the feasters. They tore the meat from the bones, and the soldier, especially, devoured the costly and unwonted meal like some ravenous animal. He could be heard chewing like a horse in the manger, and a feeling of disgust filled the physician's soul.

"Sensual beings," he murmured to himself, "animals with consciousness! And yet human beings. Strange! They languish bound in the fetters of the world of sense, and yet how much more ardently they desire that which transcends sense than we—how much more real it is to them than to us!"

"Will you have some meat?" cried the soldier, who had remarked that Nebsecht's lips moved, and tearing a piece of meat from the bone of the joint he was devouring, he held it out to the physician. Nebsecht shrank back; the greedy look, the glistening teeth, the dark, rough features of the man terrified him. And he thought of the white and fragile form of the sick girl lying within on the mat, and a question escaped his lips.

"Is the maiden, is Uarda, your own child?" he said.

The soldier struck himself on the breast. "So sure as the king Rameses is the son of Seti," he answered.

The men had finished their meal, and the flat cakes of bread which the wife of the paraschites gave them, and on which they had wiped their hands from the fat, were consumed, when the soldier, in whose slow brain the physician's question still lingered, said, sighing deeply:

"Her mother was a stranger; she laid the white dove in the raven's nest."

"Of what country was your wife a native?" asked the physician.

"That I do not know," replied the soldier.

"Did you never enquire about the family of your own wife?"

"Certainly I did: but how could she have answered me? But it is a long and strange story."

"Relate it to me," said Nebsecht, "the night is long, and I like listening better than talking. But first I will see after our patient."

When the physician had satisfied himself that Uarda was sleeping quietly and breathing regularly, he seated himself again by the paraschites and his son, and the soldier began:

"It all happened long ago. King Seti still lived, but Rameses already reigned in his stead, when I came home from the north. They had sent me to the workmen, who were building the fortifications in Zoan, the town of Rameses.* I was set over six men, Amus,** of the Hebrew race, over whom

* The Rameses of the Bible. Exodus I. 11.

** Semites.

Rameses kept such a tight hand.* Amongst the workmen there were sons of rich cattle-holders, for in levying the people it was never: 'What have you?' but 'Of what race are you?' The fortifications and the canal which was to join the Nile and the Red Sea had to be completed, and the king, to whom be long life, health, and prosperity, took the youth of Egypt with him to the wars, and left the work to the Amus, who are connected by race with his enemies in the east. One lives well in Goshen, for it is a fine country, with more than enough of corn and grass and vegetables and fish and fowls,** and I always had of the best, for amongst my six people were two mother's darlings, whose parents sent me many a piece of silver. Every one loves his children, but the Hebrews love them more tenderly than other people. We had daily our appointed tale of bricks to deliver,*** and when the sun burnt hot, I used to help the lads, and I did more in an hour than they did in three, for I am strong and was still stronger then than I am now.

"Then came the time when I was relieved. I was ordered to return to Thebes, to the prisoners of war who were building the great temple of Amon over yonder, and as I had brought home some money, and it would take a good while to finish the great dwelling of the king of the Gods, I thought of taking a wife; but no Egyptian. Of daughters of paraschites there were plenty; but I wanted to get away out of my father's accursed caste, and the other girls here, as I knew, were

* For an account of the traces of the Jews in Egypt, see Chabas, Mélanges, and Ebers, Ægypten und die Bücher Moses, also Durch Gozen zum Sinai.

** See Ebers' "Durch Gosen zum Sinai," for account of Goshen and its mention on the monuments. The charms of this landscape are highly praised in a letter written by a clerk to his superior.

*** Exodus I., 13 and 14. Exodus V., 7 and 8.

afraid of our uncleanness. In the low country I had done better, and many an Amu and Schasu woman had gladly come to my tent. From the beginning I had set my mind on an Asiatic.

"Many a time maidens taken prisoners in war were brought to be sold, but either they did not please me, or they were too dear. Meantime my money melted away, for we enjoyed life in the time of rest which followed the working hours. There were dancers too in plenty, in the foreign quarter.

"Well, it was just at the time of the holy feast of Amon-Chem, that a new transport of prisoners of war arrived, and amongst them many women, who were sold publicly to the highest bidder. The young and beautiful ones were paid for high, but even the older ones were too dear for me.

"Quite at the last a blind woman was led forward, and a withered-looking woman who was dumb, as the auctioneer, who generally praised up the merits of the prisoners, informed the buyers. The blind woman had strong hands, and was bought by a tavern-keeper, for whom she turns the handmill to this day;—the dumb woman held a child in her arms, and no one could tell whether she was young or old. She looked as though she already lay in her coffin, and the little one as though he would go under the grass before her. And her hair was red, burning red, the very color of Typhon. Her white pale face looked neither bad nor good, only weary, weary to death. On her withered white arms blue veins ran like dark cords, her hands hung feebly down, and in them hung the child. If a wind were to rise, I thought to myself, it would blow her away, and the little one with her.

"The auctioneer asked for a bid. All were silent, for the dumb shadow was of no use for work; she was half-dead, and a burial costs money.

"So passed several minutes. Then the auctioneer stepped up to her, and gave her a blow with his whip, that she might rouse herself up, and appear less miserable to the buyers. She shivered like a person in a fever, pressed the child closer to her, and looked round at every one as though seeking for help—and me full in the face. What happened now was a real wonder, for her eyes were bigger than any that I ever saw, and a demon dwelt in them that had power over me and ruled me to the end, and that day it bewitched me for the first time.

"It was not hot and I had drunk nothing, and yet I acted against my own will and better judgment when, as her eyes fell upon me, I bid all that I possessed in order to buy her. I might have had her cheaper! My companions laughed at me, the auctioneer shrugged his shoulders as he took my money, but I took the child on my arm, helped the woman up, carried her in a boat over the Nile, loaded a stone-cart with my miserable property, and drove her like a block of lime home to the old people.

"My mother shook her head, and my father looked as if he thought me mad; but neither of them said a word. They made up a bed for her, and on my spare nights I built that ruined thing hard by—it was a tidy hut once. Soon my mother grew fond of the child. It was quite small, and we called it Pennu* because it was so pretty, like a little mouse. I kept away from the foreign quarter, and saved my wages,

* Pennu is the name for the mouse in old Egyptian.

and bought a goat, which lived in front of our door when I took the woman to her own hut.

"She was dumb, but not deaf, only she did not understand our language; but the demon in her eyes spoke for her and understood what I said. She comprehended everything, and could say everything with her eyes; but best of all she knew how to thank one. No high-priest who at the great hill festival praises the Gods in long hymns for their gifts can return thanks so earnestly with his lips as she with her dumb eyes. And when she wished to pray, then it seemed as though the demon in her look was mightier than ever.

"At first I used to be impatient enough when she leaned so feebly against the wall, or when the child cried and disturbed my sleep; but she had only to look up, and the demon pressed my heart together and persuaded me that the crying was really a song. Pennu cried more sweetly too than other children, and he had such soft, white, pretty little fingers.

"One day he had been crying for a long time. At last I bent down over him, and was going to scold him, but he seized me by the beard. It was pretty to see! Afterwards he was for ever wanting to pull me about, and his mother noticed that that pleased me, for when I brought home anything good, an egg or a flower or a cake, she used to hold him up and place his little hands on my beard.

"Yes, in a few months the woman had learnt to hold him up high in her arms, for with care and quiet she had grown stronger. White she always remained and delicate, but she grew younger and more

beautiful from day to day; she can hardly have numbered twenty years when I bought her. What she was called I never heard; nor did we give her any name. She was 'the woman,' and so we called her.

"Eight moons passed by, and then the little Mouse died. I wept as she did, and as I bent over the little corpse and let my tears have free course, and thought—now he can never lift up his pretty little finger to you again; then I felt for the first time the woman's soft hand on my cheek. She stroked my rough beard as a child might, and with that looked at me so gratefully that I felt as though king Pharaoh had all at once made me a present of both Upper and Lower Egypt.

"When the Mouse was buried she got weaker again, but my mother took good care of her. I lived with her, like a father with his child. She was always friendly, but if I approached her, and tried to show her any fondness, she would look at me, and the demon in her eyes drove me back, and I let her alone.

"She grew healthier and stronger and more and more beautiful, so beautiful that I kept her hidden, and was consumed by the longing to make her my wife. A good housewife she never became, to be sure; her hands were so tender, and she did not even know how to milk the goat. My mother did that and everything else for her.

"In the daytime she stayed in her hut and worked, for she was very skillful at woman's work, and wove lace as fine as cobwebs, which my mother sold that she might bring home perfumes with the proceeds. She was very fond of them, and of flowers too; and Uarda in there takes after her.

"In the evening, when the folk from the other side had left the City of the Dead, she would often walk up and down the valley here, thoughtful and often looking up at the moon, which she was especially fond of.

"One evening in the winter-time I came home. It was already dark, and I expected to find her in front of the door. All at once, about a hundred steps behind old Hekt's cave, I heard a troop of jackals barking so furiously that I said to myself directly they had attacked a human being, and I knew too *who* it was, though no one had told me, and the woman could not call or cry out. Frantic with terror, I tore a firebrand from the hearth and the stake to which the goat was fastened out of the ground, rushed to her help, drove away the beasts, and carried her back senseless to the hut. My mother helped me, and we called her back to life. When we were alone, I wept like a child for joy at her escape, and she let me kiss her, and then she became my wife, three years after I had bought her.

"She bore me a little maid, that she herself named Uarda; for she showed us a rose, and then pointed to the child, and we understood her without words.

"Soon afterwards she died.

"You are a priest, but I tell you that when I am summoned before Osiris, if I am admitted amongst the blessed, I will ask whether I shall meet my wife, and if the doorkeeper says no, he may thrust me back, and I will go down cheerfully to the damned, if I find her again there."

"And did no sign ever betray her origin?" asked the physician.

The soldier had hidden his face in his hands; he was weeping aloud, and did not hear the question. But the paraschites answered:

"She was the child of some great personage, for in her clothes we found a golden jewel with a precious stone inscribed with strange characters. It is very costly, and my wife is keeping it for the little one."

CHAPTER XVII.

In the earliest glimmer of dawn the following day, the physician Nebsecht having satisfied himself as to the state of the sick girl, left the paraschites' hut and made his way in deepest thought to the Terrace Temple of Hatasu, to find his friend Pentaur and compose the writing which he had promised to the old man.

As the sun arose in radiance he reached the sanctuary. He expected to hear the morning song of the priests, but all was silent. He knocked and the porter, still half-asleep, opened the door.

Nebsecht enquired for the chief of the Temple.

"He died in the night," said the man yawning.

"What do you say?" cried the physician in sudden terror, "who is dead?"

"Our good old chief, Rui."

Nebsecht breathed again, and asked for Pentaur.

"You belong to the House of Seti," said the doorkeeper, "and you do not know that he is deposed from his office? The holy fathers have refused to celebrate the birth of Ra with him. He sings for himself now, alone up on the watch-tower. There you will find him."

Nebsecht strode quickly up the stairs. Several of the priests placed themselves together in groups as soon as they saw him, and began singing. He paid no heed to them, however, but hastened on to the uppermost terrace, where he found his friend occupied in writing.

Soon he learnt all that had happened, and wrathfully he cried: "You are too honest for those wise gentlemen in the House of Seti, and too pure and zealous for the rabble here. I knew it, I knew what would come of it if they introduced you to the mysteries. For us initiated there remains only the choice between lying and silence."

"The old error!" said Pentaur, "we know that the Godhead is One, we name it, 'The All,'* 'The Veil of the All,'** or simply 'Ra.' But under the name Ra we understand something different than is known to the common herd; for to us, the Universe is God, and in each of its parts we recognize a manifestation of that highest being without whom nothing is, in the heights above or in the depths below."

"To me you can say everything, for I also am initiated," interrupted Nebsecht.

* The sacred text repeatedly calls God the "One," the "only One." The pantheistic teaching of the Mysteries is most clearly expressed in those texts which are found in almost all the Kings' tombs in Thebes, and on the walls of the entrance halls. They have been collected, and contain praises to Ra, whose 75 principal manifestations are invoked. These texts and the pantheism in the esoteric teaching of the Egyptians are excellently and comprehensively treated by E. Naville in "La Litanie du Soleil." The Text of the Book of Death, the Hymn to the Sun preserved at Bulaq, and treated by Stern and Grébaut, the inscriptions on the sarcophagi and on the walls of the Temple of Ptolemy, and second in order to these, Plutarch's Treatise on Isis and Osiris, the Egyptian Mysteries of Iamblichus, and the Discourse of Hermes Trismegistus on the Human Soul, are the principal sources for the study of the secret teaching of the Egyptians. The views brought forward and developed in these discourses seem first to have come to perfection in the new kingdom. The Egyptian religion proceeded from a comparatively rude Sun and Nile worship.

** Teb temt. With a similar meaning Eusebius gives to the universe the form of a Greek Theta (Θ).

"But neither from the laity do I withhold it," cried Pentaur, "only to those who are incapable of understanding the whole, do I show the different parts. Am I a liar if I do not say, 'I speak,' but 'my mouth speaks,' if I affirm, 'Your eye sees,' when it is you yourself who are the seer. When the light of the only One manifests itself, then I fervently render thanks to him in hymns, and the most luminous of his forms I name Ra. When I look upon yonder green fields, I call upon the faithful to give thanks to Rennut,* that is, that active manifestation of the One, through which the corn attains to its ripe maturity. Am I filled with wonder at the bounteous gifts with which that divine stream whose origin is hidden, blesses our land, then I adore the One as the God Hapi,** the secret one. Whether we view the sun, the harvest, or the Nile, whether we contemplate with admiration the unity and harmony of the visible or invisible world, still it is always with the Only, the All-embracing One we have to do, to whom we also ourselves belong as those of his manifestations in which he places his self-consciousness. The imagination of the multitude is limited . . . . ."

"And so we lions,*** give them the morsel that we can devour at one gulp, finely chopped up, and diluted with broth as if for the weak stomach of a sick man."

"Not so; we only feel it our duty to temper and sweeten the sharp potion, which for men even is almost

* Goddess of the harvest.

** The Nile.

*** "The priests," says Clement of Alexandria, "allow none to be participators in their mysteries, except kings or such amongst themselves as are distinguished for virtue or wisdom." The same thing is shown by the monuments in many places.

too strong, before we offer it to the children, the babes in spirit. The sages of old veiled indeed the highest truths in allegorical forms, in symbols, and finally in a beautiful and richly-colored mythos, but they brought them near to the multitude shrouded it is true but still discernible."

"Discernible?" said the physician, "discernible? Why then the veil?"

"And do you imagine that the multitude could look the naked truth in the face,* and not despair?"

"Can I, can any one who looks straight forward, and strives to see the truth and nothing but the truth?" cried the physician. "We both of us know that things only are, to us, such as they picture themselves in the prepared mirror of our souls. I see grey, grey, and white, white, and have accustomed myself in my yearning after knowledge, not to attribute the smallest part to my own idiosyncrasy, if such indeed there be existing in my empty breast. You look straight onwards as I do, but in you each idea is transfigured, for in your soul invisible shaping powers are at work, which set the crooked straight, clothe the commonplace with charm, the repulsive with beauty. You are a poet, an artist; I only seek for truth."

"Only?" said Pentaur, "it is just on account of that effort that I esteem you so highly, and, as you already know, I also desire nothing but the truth."

"I know, I know," said the physician nodding, "but our ways run side by side without ever touching, and our final goal is the reading of a riddle, of which

* In Sais the statue of Athene (Neith) has the following inscription: "I am the All, the Past, the Present, and the Future, my veil has no mortal yet lifted." Plutarch, Isis and Osiris 9, a similar quotation by Proclus, in Plato's Timaeus.

there are many solutions. You believe yourself to have found the right one, and perhaps none exists."

"Then let us content ourselves with the nearest and the most beautiful," said Pentaur.

"The most beautiful?" cried Nebsecht indignantly. "Is that monster, whom you call God, beautiful—the giant who for ever regenerates himself that he may devour himself again? God is the All, you say, who suffices to himself. Eternal he is and shall be, because all that goes forth from him is absorbed by him again, and the great niggard bestows no grain of sand, no ray of light, no breath of wind, without reclaiming it for his household, which is ruled by no design, no reason, no goodness, but by a tyrannical necessity, whose slave he himself is. The coward hides behind the cloud of incomprehensibility, and can be revealed only by himself—I would I could strip him of the veil! Thus I see the thing that you call God!"

"A ghastly picture," said Pentaur, "because you forget that we recognize reason to be the essence of the All, the penetrating and moving power of the universe which is manifested in the harmonious working together of its parts, and in ourselves also, since we are formed out of its substance, and inspired with its soul."

"Is the warfare of life in any way reasonable?" asked Nebsecht. "Is this eternal destruction in order to build up again especially well-designed and wise? And with this introduction of reason into the All, you provide yourself with a self-devised ruler, who terribly resembles the gracious masters and mistresses that you exhibit to the people."

"Only apparently," answered Pentaur, "only because that which transcends sense is communicable through the medium of the senses alone. When God manifests himself as the wisdom of the world, we call him 'the Word,' 'He, who covers his limbs with names,'* as the sacred Text expresses itself, is the power which gives to things their distinctive forms; the scarabæus, 'which enters life as its own son'** reminds us of the ever self-renewing creative power which causes you to call our merciful and benevolent God a monster, but which you can deny as little as you can the happy choice of the type; for, as you know, there are only male scarabei, and this animal reproduces itself." ***

Nebsecht smiled. "If all the doctrines of the mysteries," he said, "have no more truth than this happily chosen image, they are in a bad way. These beetles have for years been my friends and companions. I know their family life, and I can assure you that there are males and females amongst them as amongst cats, apes, and human beings. Your 'good God' I do not know, and what I least comprehend in thinking it over quietly is the circumstance that you distinguish a good and evil principle in the world. If the All is indeed God, if God as the scriptures teach, is goodness, and if besides him is nothing at all, where is a place to be found for evil?"

"You talk like a school-boy," said Pentaur indignantly. "All that is, is good and reasonable in itself, but the infinite One, who prescribes his own laws and his own paths, grants to the finite its continuance through continual renewal, and in the changing forms

* From inscriptions at Abydos, and the Praises of Ra at Biban el Muluk.

** From the same Texts.

*** According to Horapollon, where it is stated: ἐκ μόνου πατρὸς τὴν γένεσιν ἔχει ὁ κάνδαρος

of the finite progresses for evermore. What we call evil, darkness, wickedness, is in itself divine, good, reasonable, and clear; but it appears in another light to our clouded minds, because we perceive the way only and not the goal, the details only, and not the whole. Even so, superficial listeners blame the music, in which a discord is heard, which the harper has only evoked from the strings that his hearers may more deeply feel the purity of the succeeding harmony; even so, a fool blames the painter who has colored his board with black, and does not wait for the completion of the picture which shall be thrown into clearer relief by the dark background; even so, a child chides the noble tree, whose fruit rots, that a new life may spring up from its kernel. Apparent evil is but an antechamber to higher bliss, as every sunset is but veiled by night, and will soon show itself again as the red dawn of a new day."

"How convincing all that sounds!" answered the physician, "all, even the terrible, wins charm from your lips; but I could invert your proposition, and declare that it is evil that rules the world, and sometimes gives us one drop of sweet content, in order that we may more keenly feel the bitterness of life. You see harmony and goodness in everything. I have observed that passion awakens life, that all existence is a conflict, that one being devours another."

"And do you not feel the beauty of visible creation, and does not the immutable law in everything fill you with admiration and humility?"

"For beauty," replied Nebsecht, "I have never sought; the organ is somehow wanting in me to understand it of myself, though I willingly allow you to

mediate between us. But of law in nature I fully appreciate the worth, for that is the veritable soul of the universe. You call the One 'Temt,' that is to say the total—the unity which is reached by the addition of many units; and that pleases me, for the elements of the universe and the powers which prescribe the paths of life are strictly defined by measure and number—but irrespective of beauty or benevolence."

"Such views," cried Pentaur troubled, "are the result of your strange studies. You kill and destroy, in order, as you yourself say, to come upon the track of the secrets of life. Look out upon nature, develop the faculty which you declare to be wanting in you, and the beauty of creation will teach you without my assistance that you are praying to a false god."

"I do not pray," said Nebsecht, "for the law which moves the world is as little affected by prayers as the current of the sands in your hour-glass. Who tells you that I do not seek to come upon the track of the first beginning of things? I proved to you just now that I know more about the origin of Scarabei than you do. I have killed many an animal, not only to study its organism, but also to investigate how it has built up its form. But precisely in this work my organ for beauty has become blunt rather than keen. I tell you that the beginning of things is not more attractive to contemplate than their death and decomposition."

Pentaur looked at the physician enquiringly.

"I also for once," continued Nebsecht, "will speak in figures. Look at this wine, how pure it is, how fragrant; and yet it was trodden from the grape by the brawny feet of the vintagers. And those full ears

of corn! They gleam golden yellow, and will yield us snow-white meal when they are ground, and yet they grew from a rotting seed. Lately you were praising to me the beauty of the great Hall of Columns nearly completed in the Temple of Amon over yonder in Thebes.* How posterity will admire it! I saw that Hall arise. There lay masses of freestone in wild confusion, dust in heaps that took away my breath, and three months since I was sent over there, because above a hundred workmen engaged in stone-polishing under the burning sun had been beaten to death. Were I a poet like you, I would show you a hundred similar pictures, in which you would not find much beauty. In the meantime, we have enough to do in observing the existing order of things, and investigating the laws by which it is governed."

"I have never clearly understood your efforts, and have difficulty in comprehending why you did not turn to the science of the haruspices," said Pentaur. "Do you then believe that the changing, and—owing to the conditions by which they are surrounded—the dependent life of plants and animals is governed by law, rule, and numbers like the movement of the stars?"

"What a question! Is the strong and mighty hand, which compels yonder heavenly bodies to roll onward in their carefully-appointed orbits, not delicate enough to prescribe the conditions of the flight of the bird, and the beating of the human heart?"

"There we are again with the heart," said the poet smiling, "are you any nearer your aim?"

* Begun by Rameses I. continued by Seti I., completed by Rameses II. The remains of this immense hall, with its 134 columns, have not their equal in the world.

The physician became very grave. "Perhaps to-morrow even," he said, "I may have what I need. You have your palette there with red and black color, and a writing reed. May I use this sheet of papyrus?"

"Of course; but first tell me . . . ."

"Do not ask; you would not approve of my scheme, and there would only be a fresh dispute."

"I think," said the poet, laying his hand on his friend's shoulder, "that we have no reason to fear disputes. So far they have been the cement, the refreshing dew of our friendship."

"So long as they treated of ideas only, and not of deeds."

"You intend to get possession of a human heart!" cried the poet. "Think of what you are doing! The heart is the vessel of that effluence of the universal soul, which lives in us."

"Are you so sure of that?" cried the physician with some irritation, "then give me the proof. Have you ever examined a heart, has any one member of my profession done so? The hearts of criminals and prisoners of war even are declared sacred from touch, and when we stand helpless by a patient, and see our medicines work harm as often as good, why is it? Only because we physicians are expected to work as blindly as an astronomer, if he were required to look at the stars through a board. At Heliopolis I entreated the great Urma* Rahotep, the truly learned chief of our craft, and who held me in esteem, to allow me to examine the heart of a dead Amu; but he refused me, because the great Sechet** leads virtuous

* High-priest of Heliopolis.

** The lion-headed goddess.

Semites also into the fields of the blessed.* And then followed all the old scruples: that to cut up the heart of a beast even is sinful, because it also is the vehicle of a soul, perhaps a condemned and miserable human soul, which before it can return to the One, must undergo purification by passing through the bodies of animals. I was not satisfied, and declared to him that my great-grandfather Nebsecht, before he wrote his treatise on the heart,** must certainly have examined such an organ. Then he answered me that the divinity had revealed to him what he had written, and therefore his work had been accepted amongst the sacred writings of Toth,*** which stood fast and unassailable as the laws of the world; he wished to give me peace for quiet work, and I also, he said, might be a chosen spirit, the divinity might perhaps vouchsafe revelations to me too. I was young at that time, and spent my nights in prayer, but I only wasted away, and my spirit grew darker instead of clearer. Then I killed in secret—first a fowl, then rats, then a rabbit, and cut up their hearts, and followed the vessels that lead out of them, and know little more now than I did at first; but I must get to the bottom of the truth, and I must have a human heart."

"What will that do for you?" asked Pentaur; "you cannot hope to perceive the invisible and the infinite with your human eyes?"

"Do you know my great-grandfather's treatise?"

"A little," answered the poet; "he said that wherever he laid his finger, whether on the head, the hands,

* According to the inscription accompanying the famous representations of the four nations (Egyptians, Semites, Libyans, and Ethiopians) in the tomb of Seti I.

** This treatise forms the most interesting section of the papyrus Ebers. Published by W. Engelmann, Leipzig.

*** Called by the Greeks "Hermetic Books." The Papyrus Ebers is the work called by Clemens of Alexandria "the Book of Remedies."

or the stomach, he everywhere met with the heart, because its vessels go into all the members, and the heart is the meeting point of all these vessels. Then Nebsecht proceeds to state how these are distributed in the different members, and shows—is it not so?—that the various mental states, such as anger, grief, aversion, and also the ordinary use of the word heart, declare entirely for his view."

"That is it. We have already discussed it, and I believe that he is right, so far as the blood is concerned, and the animal sensations. But the pure and luminous intelligence in us—that has another seat," and the physician struck his broad but low forehead with his hand. "I have observed heads by the hundred down at the place of execution, and I have also removed the top of the skulls of living animals. But now let me write, before we are disturbed."*

The physician took the reed, moistened it with black color prepared from burnt papyrus, and in elegant hieratic characters** wrote the paper for the paraschites, in which he confessed to having impelled him to the theft of a heart, and in the most binding

* Human brains are prescribed for a malady of the eyes in the Ebers papyrus. Herophilus, one of the first scholars of the Alexandrine Museum, studied not only the bodies of executed criminals, but made his experiments also on living malefactors. He maintained that the four cavities of the human brain are the seat of the soul.

** At the time of our narrative the Egyptians had two kinds of writing—the hieroglyphic, which was generally used for monumental inscriptions, and in which the letters consisted of conventional representations of various objects, mathematical and arbitrary symbols, and the hieratic, used for writing on papyrus, and in which, with the view of saving time, the written pictures underwent so many alterations and abbreviations that the originals could hardly be recognized. In the 8th century there was a further abridgment of the hieratic writing, which was called the demotic, or people's writing, and was used in commerce. Whilst the hieroglyphic and hieratic writings laid the foundations of the old sacred dialect, the demotic letters were only used to write the spoken language of the people. E. de Rougé's Chrestomathie Égyptienne. H. Brugsch's Hieroglyphische Grammatik. Le Page Renouf's shorter hieroglyphical grammar. Ebers' Ueber das Hieroglyphische Schriftsystem, 2nd edition, 1875, in the lectures of Virchow Holtzendorff.

manner declared himself willing to take the old man's guilt upon himself before Osiris and the judges of the dead.

When he had finished, Pentaur held out his hand for the paper, but Nebsecht folded it together, placed it in a little bag in which lay an amulet that his dying mother had hung round his neck, and said, breathing deeply:

"That is done. Farewell, Pentaur."

But the poet held the physician back; he spoke to him with the warmest words, and conjured him to abandon his enterprise. His prayers, however, had no power to touch Nebsecht, who only strove forcibly to disengage his finger from Pentaur's strong hand, which held him as in a clasp of iron. The excited poet did not remark that he was hurting his friend, until after a new and vain attempt at freeing himself, Nebsecht cried out in pain, "You are crushing my finger!"

A smile passed over the poet's face, he loosened his hold on the physician, and stroked the reddened hand like a mother who strives to divert her child from pain.

"Don't be angry with me, Nebsecht," he said, "you know my unlucky fists, and to-day they really ought to hold you fast, for you have too mad a purpose on hand."

"Mad?" said the physician, whilst he smiled in his turn. "It may be so; but do you not know that we Egyptians all have a peculiar tenderness for our follies, and are ready to sacrifice house and land to them?"

"Our own house and our own land," cried the poet: and then added seriously, "but not the existence, not the happiness of another."

"Have I not told you that I do not look upon the heart as the seat of our intelligence? So far as I am concerned, I would as soon be buried with a ram's heart as with my own."

"I do not speak of the plundered dead, but of the living," said the poet. "If the deed of the paraschites is discovered, he is undone, and you would only have saved that sweet child in the hut behind there, to fling her into deeper misery."

Nebsecht looked at the other with as much astonishment and dismay, as if he had been awakened from sleep by bad tidings. Then he cried: "All that I have, I would share with the old man and Uarda."

"And who would protect her?"

"Her father."

"That rough drunkard who to-morrow or the day after may be sent no one knows where."

"He is a good fellow," said the physician interrupting his friend, and stammering violently. "But who would do anything to the child? She is so—so .... She is so charming, so perfectly sweet and lovely."

With these last words he cast down his eyes and reddened like a girl.

"You understand that," he said, "better than I do; yes, and you also think her beautiful! Strange! you must not laugh if I confess—I am but a man like every one else—when I confess, that I believe I have at length discovered in myself the missing organ for beauty of form—not believe merely, but truly have discovered it, for it has not only spoken, but cried, raged, till I felt a rushing in my ears, and for the first time was attracted more by the sufferer than by suffering.

I have sat in the hut as though spell-bound, and gazed at her hair, at her eyes, at how she breathed. They must long since have missed me at the House of Seti, perhaps discovered all my preparations, when seeking me in my room! For two days and nights I have allowed myself to be drawn away from my work, for the sake of this child. Were I one of the laity, whom you would approach, I should say that demons had bewitched me. But it is not that,"—and with these words the physician's eyes flamed up—"it is not that! The animal in me, the low instincts of which the heart is the organ, and which swelled my breast at her bedside, they have mastered the pure and fine emotions here—here in this brain; and in the very moment when I hoped to know as the God knows whom you call the Prince of knowledge, in that moment I must learn that the animal in me is stronger than that which I call my God."

The physician, agitated and excited, had fixed his eyes on the ground during these last words, and hardly noticed the poet, who listened to him wondering and full of sympathy. For a time both were silent; then Pentaur laid his hand on his friend's hand, and said cordially:

"My soul is no stranger to what you feel, and heart and head, if I may use your own words, have known a like emotion. But I know that what we feel, although it may be foreign to our usual sensations, is loftier and more precious than these, not lower. Not the animal, Nebsecht, is it that you feel in yourself, but God. Goodness is the most beautiful attribute of the divine, and you have always been well-disposed towards great and small; but I ask you, have you ever before

felt so irresistibly impelled to pour out an ocean of goodness on another being, whether for Uarda you would not more joyfully and more self-forgetfully sacrifice all that you have, and all that you are, than to father and mother and your oldest friend?"

Nebsecht nodded assentingly.

"Well then," cried Pentaur, "follow your new and godlike emotion, be good to Uarda and do not sacrifice her to your vain wishes. My poor friend! With your enquiries into the secrets of life, you have never looked round upon itself, which spreads open and inviting before our eyes. Do you imagine that the maiden who can thus inflame the calmest thinker in Thebes, will not be coveted by a hundred of the common herd when her protector fails her? Need I tell you that amongst the dancers in the foreign quarter nine out of ten are the daughters of outlawed parents? Can you endure the thought that by your hand innocence may be consigned to vice, the rose trodden under foot in the mud? Is the human heart that you desire, worth an Uarda? Now go, and to-morrow come again to me your friend who understands how to sympathize with all you feel, and to whom you have approached so much the nearer to-day that you have learned to share his purest happiness."

Pentaur held out his hand to the physician, who held it some time, then went thoughtfully and lingeringly, unmindful of the burning glow of the mid-day sun, over the mountain into the valley of the king's graves towards the hut of the paraschites.

Here he found the soldier with his daughter. "Where is the old man?" he asked anxiously.

"He has gone to his work in the house of the em-

balmer," was the answer. "If anything should happen to him he bade me tell you not to forget the writing and the book. He was as though out of his mind when he left us, and put the ram's heart in his bag and took it with him. Do you remain with the little one; my mother is at work, and I must go with the prisoners of war to Harmontis."*

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHILE the two friends from the House of Seti were engaged in conversation, Katuti restlessly paced the large open hall of her son-in-law's house, in which we have already seen her. A snow-white cat followed her steps, now playing with the hem of her long plain dress, and now turning to a large stand on which the dwarf Nemu sat in a heap; where formerly a silver statue had stood, which a few months previously had been sold.

He liked this place, for it put him in a position to look into the eyes of his mistress and other full-grown people.

"If you have betrayed me! If you have deceived me!" said Katuti with a threatening gesture as she passed his perch.

"Put me on a hook to angle for a crocodile if I have. But I am curious to know how he will offer you the money."

"You swore to me," interrupted his mistress with feverish agitation, "that you had not used my name in asking Paaker to save us?"

"A thousand times I swear it," said the little man.

* The Erment of to-day, the nearest town to the south of Thebes, at a day's journey from that city.

"Shall I repeat all our conversation? I tell thee he will sacrifice his land, and his house—great gate and all, for one friendly glance from Nefert's eyes."

"If only Mena loved her as he does!" sighed the widow, and then again she walked up and down the hall in silence, while the dwarf looked out at the garden entrance. Suddenly she paused in front of Nemu, and said so hoarsely that Nemu shuddered:

"I wish she were a widow."

The little man made a gesture as if to protect himself from the evil eye, but at the same instant he slipped down from his pedestal, and exclaimed:

"There is a chariot, and I hear his big dog barking. It is he. Shall I call Nefert?"

"No!" said Katuti in a low voice, and she clutched at the back of a chair as if for support.

The dwarf shrugged his shoulders, and slunk behind a clump of ornamental plants, and a few minutes later Paaker stood in the presence of Katuti, who greeted him with quiet dignity and self-possession.

Not a feature of her finely-cut face betrayed her inward agitation, and after the Mohar had greeted her she said with rather patronizing friendliness:

"I thought that you would come. Take a seat. Your heart is like your father's; now that you are friends with us again it is not by halves."

Paaker had come to offer his aunt the sum which was necessary for the redemption of her husband's mummy. He had doubted for a long time whether he should not leave this to his mother, but reserve partly and partly vanity had kept him from doing so. He liked to display his wealth, and Katuti should learn what he could do, what a son-in-law she had rejected.

He would have preferred to send the gold, which he had resolved to give away, by the hand of one of his slaves, like a tributary prince. But that could not be done; so he put on his finger a ring set with a valuable stone, which king Seti had given to his father, and added various clasps and bracelets to his dress.

When, before leaving the house, he looked at himself in a mirror, he said to himself with some satisfaction, that he, as he stood, was worth as much as the whole of Mena's estates.

Since his conversation with Nemu, and the dwarf's interpretation of his dream, the path which he must tread to reach his aim had been plain before him. Nefert's mother must be won with the gold which would save her from disgrace, and Mena must be sent to the other world. He relied chiefly on his own reckless obstinacy—which he liked to call firm determination—Nemu's cunning, and the love-philter.

He now approached Katuti with the certainty of success, like a merchant who means to acquire some costly object, and feels that he is rich enough to pay for it. But his aunt's proud and dignified manner confounded him.

He had pictured her quite otherwise, spirit-broken, and suppliant; and he had expected, and hoped to earn, Nefert's thanks as well as her mother's by his generosity. Mena's pretty wife was however absent, and Katuti did not send for her even after he had enquired after her health.

The widow made no advances, and some time passed in indifferent conversation, till Paaker abruptly informed her that he had heard of her son's reckless

conduct, and had decided, as being his mother's nearest relation, to preserve her from the degradation that threatened her. For the sake of his bluntness, which she took for honesty, Katuti forgave the magnificence of his dress, which under the circumstances certainly seemed ill-chosen; she thanked him with dignity, but warmly, more for the sake of her children than for her own; for life she said was opening before them, while for her it was drawing to its close.

"You are still at a good time of life," said Paaker.

"Perhaps at the best," replied the widow, "at any rate from my point of view; regarding life as I do as a charge, a heavy responsibility."

"The administration of this involved estate must give you many anxious hours—that I understand."

Katuti nodded, and then said sadly:

"I could bear it all, if I were not condemned to see my poor child being brought to misery without being able to help her or advise her. You once would willingly have married her, and I ask you, was there a maiden in Thebes—nay in all Egypt—to compare with her for beauty? Was she not worthy to be loved, and is she not so still? Does she deserve that her husband should leave her to starve, neglect her, and take a strange woman into his tent as if he had repudiated her? I see what you feel about it! You throw all the blame on me. Your heart says: 'Why did she break off our betrothal,' and your right feeling tells you that you would have given her a happier lot."

With these words Katuti took her nephew's hand, and went on with increasing warmth.

"We know you to-day for the most magnanimous

man in Thebes, for you have requited injustice with an immense benefaction; but even as a boy you were kind and noble. Your father's wish has alway been dear and sacred to me, for during his lifetime he always behaved to us as an affectionate brother, and I would sooner have sown the seeds of sorrow for myself than for your mother, my beloved sister. I brought up my child—I guarded her jealously—for the young hero who was absent, proving his valor in Syria—for you and for you only. Then your father died, my sole stay and protector."

"I know it all!" interrupted Paaker looking gloomily at the floor.

"Who should have told you?" said the widow. "For your mother, when that had happened which seemed incredible, forbid us her house, and shut her ears. The king himself urged Mena's suit, for he loves him as his own son, and when I represented your prior claim he commanded;—and who may resist the commands of the sovereign of two worlds, the Son of Ra? Kings have short memories; how often did your father hazard his life for him, how many wounds had he received in his service. For your father's sake he might have spared you such an affront, and such pain."

"And have I myself served him, or not?" asked the pioneer flushing darkly.

"He knows you less," returned Katuti apologetically. Then she changed her tone to one of sympathy, and went on:

"How was it that you, young as you were, aroused his dissatisfaction, his dislike, nay his—"

"His what?" asked the pioneer, trembling with excitement.

"Let that pass!" said the widow soothingly. "The favor and disfavor of kings are as those of the Gods. Men rejoice in the one or bow to the other."

"What feeling have I aroused in Rameses besides dissatisfaction, and dislike? I insist on knowing!" said Paaker with increasing vehemence.

"You alarm me," the widow declared. "And in speaking ill of you, his only motive was to raise his favorite in Nefert's estimation."

"Tell me what he said!" cried the pioneer; cold drops stood on his brown forehead, and his glaring eyes showed the white eye-balls.

Katuti quailed before him, and drew back, but he followed her, seized her arm, and said huskily:

"What did he say?"

"Paaker!" cried the widow in pain and indignation. "Let me go. It is better for you that I should not repeat the words with which Rameses sought to turn Nefert's heart from you. Let me go, and remember to whom you are speaking."

But Paaker gripped her elbow the tighter, and urgently repeated his question.

"Shame upon you!" cried Katuti, "you are hurting me; let me go! You will not till you have heard what he said? Have your own way then, but the words are forced from me! He said that if he did not know your mother Setchem for an honest woman, he never would have believed you were your father's son—for you were no more like him than an owl to an eagle."

Paaker took his hand from Katuti's arm. "And so —and so—" he muttered with pale lips.

"Nefert took your part, and I too, but in vain. Do not take the words too hardly. Your father was a man without an equal, and Rameses cannot forget that we are related to the old royal house. His grandfather, his father, and himself are usurpers, and there is one now living who has a better right to the throne than he has."

"The Regent Ani!" exclaimed Paaker decisively.

Katuti nodded, she went up to the pioneer and said in a whisper:

"I put myself in your hands, though I know they may be raised against me. But you are my natural ally, for that same act of Rameses that disgraced and injured you, made me a partner in the designs of Ani. The king robbed you of your bride, me of my daughter. He filled your soul with hatred for your arrogant rival, and mine with passionate regret for the lost happiness of my child. I feel the blood of Hatasu in my veins, and my spirit is high enough to govern men. It was I who roused the sleeping ambition of the Regent—I who directed his gaze to the throne to which he was destined by the Gods. The ministers of the Gods, the priests, are favorably disposed to us; we have—"

At this moment there was a commotion in the garden, and a breathless slave rushed in exclaiming:

"The Regent is at the gate!"

Paaker stood in stupid perplexity, but he collected himself with an effort and would have gone, but Katuti detained him.

"I will go forward to meet Ani," she said. "He

will be rejoiced to see you, for he esteems you highly and was a friend of your father's."

As soon as Katuti had left the hall, the dwarf Nemu crept out of his hiding-place, placed himself in front of Paaker, and asked boldly:

"Well? Did I give thee good advice yesterday, or no?"

But Paaker did not answer him, he pushed him aside with his foot, and walked up and down in deep thought.

Katuti met the Regent half way down the garden. He held a manuscript roll in his hand, and greeted her from afar with a friendly wave of his hand.

The widow looked at him with astonishment.

It seemed to her that he had grown taller and younger since the last time she had seen him.

"Hail to your highness!" she cried, half in joke half reverently, and she raised her hands in supplication, as if he already wore the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. "Have the nine* Gods met you? have the Hathors kissed you in your slumbers? This is a white day—a lucky day—I read it in your face!"

"That is reading a cipher!" said Ani gaily, but with dignity. "Read this despatch."

Katuti took the roll from his hand, read it through, and then returned it.

"The troops you equipped have conquered the allied armies of the Ethiopians," she said gravely,

* The Egyptians commonly classed their Gods in Triads, and $3\times3=9$, but also sometimes in groups of 8, 13 and 15. In the tale of "The Two Brothers" the Holy Nine meet Batau, and make a wife for him.

"and are bringing their prince in fetters to Thebes, with endless treasure, and ten thousand prisoners! The Gods be praised!"

"And above all things I thank the Gods that my general Scheschenk—my foster-brother and friend—is returning well and unwounded from the war. I think, Katuti, that the figures in our dreams are this day taking forms of flesh and blood!"

"They are growing to the stature of heroes!" cried the widow. "And you yourself, my lord, have been stirred by the breath of the Divinity. You walk like the worthy son of Ra, the courage of Menth beams in your eyes, and you smile like the victorious Horus."

"Patience, patience my friend," said Ani, moderating the eagerness of the widow; "now, more than ever, we must cling to my principle of over-estimating the strength of our opponents, and underrating our own. Nothing has succeeded on which I had counted, and on the contrary many things have justified my fears that they would fail. The beginning of the end is hardly dawning on us."

"But successes, like misfortunes, never come singly," replied Katuti.

"I agree with you," said Ani. "The events of life seem to me to fall in groups. Every misfortune brings its fellow with it—like every piece of luck. Can you tell me of a second success?"

"Women win no battles," said the widow smiling. "But they win allies, and I have gained a powerful one."

"A God or an army?" asked Ani.

"Something between the two," she replied. "Paaker, the king's chief pioneer, has joined us;" and she briefly

related to Ani the history of her nephew's love and hatred.

Ani listened in silence; then he said with an expression of much disquiet and anxiety:

"This man is a follower of Rameses, and must shortly return to him. Many may guess at our projects, but every additional person who knows them may become a traitor. You are urging me, forcing me, forward too soon. A thousand well-prepared enemies are less dangerous than one untrustworthy ally—"

"Paaker is secured to us," replied Katuti positively.

"Who will answer for him?" asked Ani.

"His life shall be in your hand," replied Katuti gravely. "My shrewd little dwarf Nemu knows that he has committed some secret crime, which the law punishes by death."

The Regent's countenance cleared.

"That alters the matter," he said with satisfaction.

"Has he committed a murder?"

"No," said Katuti, "but Nemu has sworn to reveal to you alone all that he knows. He is wholly devoted to us."

"Well and good," said Ani thoughtfully, "but he too is imprudent—much too imprudent. You are like a rider, who to win a wager urges his horse to leap over spears. If he falls on the points, it is he that suffers; you let him lie there, and go on your way."

"Or are impaled at the same time as the noble horse," said Katuti gravely. "You have more to win, and at the same time more to lose than we; but the meanest clings to life; and I must tell you, Ani, that I work for you, not to win any thing through your success, but because you are as dear to me as a brother,

and because I see in you the embodiment of my father's claims which have been trampled on."

Ani gave her his hand and asked:

"Did you also as my friend speak to Bent-Anat?—Do I interpret your silence rightly?"

Katuti sadly shook her head; but Ani went on: "Yesterday that would have decided me to give her up; but to-day my courage has risen, and if the Hathors be my friends I may yet win her."

With these words he went in advance of the widow into the hall, where Paaker was still walking uneasily up and down.

The pioneer bowed low before the Regent, who returned the greeting with a half-haughty, half-familiar wave of the hand, and when he had seated himself in an arm-chair politely addressed Paaker as the son of a friend, and a relation of his family.

"All the world," he said, "speaks of your reckless courage. Men like you are rare; I have none such attached to me. I wish you stood nearer to me; but Rameses will not part with you, although—although—In point of fact your office has two aspects; it requires the daring of a soldier, and the dexterity of a scribe. No one denies that you have the first, but the second—the sword and the reed-pen are very different weapons, one requires supple fingers, the other a sturdy fist. The king used to complain of your reports—is he better satisfied with them now?"

"I hope so," replied the Mohar; "my brother Horus is a practised writer, and accompanies me in my journeys."

"That is well," said Ani. "If I had the management of affairs I should treble your staff, and give you

four—five—six scribes under you, who should be entirely at your command, and to whom you could give the materials for the reports to be sent out. Your office demands that you should be both brave and circumspect; these characteristics are rarely united; but there are scriveners by hundreds in the temples."

"So it seems to me," said Paaker.

Ani looked down meditatively, and continued—"Rameses is fond of comparing you with your father. That is unfair, for he—who is now with the justified—was without an equal; at once the bravest of heroes and the most skilful of scribes. You are judged unjustly; and it grieves me all the more that you belong, through your mother, to my poor but royal house. We will see whether I cannot succeed in putting you in the right place. For the present you are required in Syria almost as soon as you have got home. You have shown that you are a man who does not fear death, and who can render good service, and you might now enjoy your wealth in peace with your wife."

"I am alone," said Paaker.

"Then, if you come home again, let Katuti seek you out the prettiest wife in Egypt," said the Regent smiling. "She sees herself every day in her mirror, and must be a connoisseur in the charms of women."

Ani rose with these words, bowed to Paaker with studied friendliness, gave his hand to Katuti, and said as he left the hall:

"Send me to-day the—the handkerchief—by the dwarf Nemu."

When he was already in the garden, he turned once more and said to Paaker:

"Some friends are supping with me to-day; pray let me see you too."

The pioneer bowed; he dimly perceived that he was entangled in invisible toils. Up to the present moment he had been proud of his devotion to his calling, of his duties as Mohar; and now he had discovered that the king, whose chain of honor hung round his neck, undervalued him, and perhaps only suffered him to fill his arduous and dangerous post for the sake of his father, while he, notwithstanding the temptations offered him in Thebes by his wealth, had accepted it willingly and disinterestedly. He knew that his skill with the pen was small, but that was no reason why he should be despised; often had he wished that he could reconstitute his office exactly as Ani had suggested, but his petition to be allowed a secretary had been rejected by Rameses. What he spied out, he was told was to be kept secret, and no one could be responsible for the secrecy of another.

As his brother Horus grew up, he had followed him as his obedient assistant, even after he had married a wife, who, with her child, remained in Thebes under the care of Setchem.

He was now filling Paaker's place in Syria during his absence; badly enough, as the pioneer thought, and yet not without credit; for the fellow knew how to write smooth words with a graceful pen.

Paaker, accustomed to solitude, became absorbed in thought, forgetting everything that surrounded him; even the widow herself, who had sunk on to a couch, and was observing him in silence.

He gazed into vacancy, while a crowd of sensations rushed confusedly through his brain. He thought him-

self cruelly ill-used, and he felt too that it was incumbent on him to become the instrument of a terrible fate to some other person. All was dim and chaotic in his mind, his love merged in his hatred; only one thing was clear and unclouded by doubt, and that was his strong conviction that Nefert would be his.

The Gods indeed were in deep disgrace with him. How much he had expended upon them—and with what a grudging hand they had rewarded him; he knew of but one indemnification for his wasted life, and in that he believed so firmly that he counted on it as if it were capital which he had invested in sound securities. But at this moment his resentful feelings embittered the sweet dream of hope, and he strove in vain for calmness and clear-sightedness; when such cross-roads as these met, no amulet, no divining rod could guide him; here he must think for himself, and beat his own road before he could walk in it; and yet he could think out no plan, and arrive at no decision.

He grasped his burning forehead in his hands, and started from his brooding reverie, to remember where he was, to recall his conversation with the mother of the woman he loved, and her saying that she was capable of guiding men.

"She perhaps may be able to think for me," he muttered to himself. "Action suits me better."

He slowly went up to her and said:

"So it is settled then—we are confederates."

"Against Rameses, and for Ani," she replied, giving him her slender hand.

"In a few days I start for Syria, meanwhile you can make up your mind what commissions you have

to give me. The money for your son shall be conveyed to you to-day before sunset. May I not pay my respects to Nefert?"

"Not now, she is praying in the temple."

"But to-morrow?"

"Willingly, my dear friend. She will be delighted to see you, and to thank you."

"Farewell, Katuti."

"Call me mother," said the widow, and she waved her veil to him as a last farewell.

CHAPTER XIX.

As soon as Paaker had disappeared behind the shrubs, Katuti struck a little sheet of metal, a slave appeared, and Katuti asked her whether Nefert had returned from the temple.

"Her litter is just now at the side gate," was the answer.

"I await her here," said the widow. The slave went away, and a few minutes later Nefert entered the hall.

"You want me?" she said; and after kissing her mother she sank upon her couch. "I am tired," she exclaimed, "Nemu, take a fan and keep the flies off me."

The dwarf sat down on a cushion by her couch, and began to wave the semi-circular fan of ostrich-feathers; but Katuti put him aside and said:

"You can leave us for the present; we want to speak to each other in private."

The dwarf shrugged his shoulders and got up, but

Nefert looked at her mother with an irresistible appeal.

"Let him stay," she said, as pathetically as if her whole happiness depended upon it. "The flies torment me so, and Nemu always holds his tongue."

She patted the dwarf's big head as if he were a lap-dog, and called the white cat, which with a graceful leap sprang on to her shoulder and stood there with its back arched, to be stroked by her slender fingers.

Nemu looked enquiringly at his mistress, but Katuti turned to her daughter, and said in a warning voice:

"I have very serious things to discuss with you."

"Indeed?" said her daughter, "but I cannot be stung by the flies all the same. Of course, if you wish it—"

"Nemu may stay then," said Katuti, and her voice had the tone of that of a nurse who gives way to a naughty child. "Besides, he knows what I have to talk about."

"There now!" said Nefert, kissing the head of the white cat, and she gave the fan back to the dwarf.

The widow looked at her daughter with sincere compassion, she went up to her and looked for the thousandth time in admiration at her pretty face.

"Poor child," she sighed, "how willingly I would spare you the frightful news which sooner or later you must hear—must bear. Leave off your foolish play with the cat, I have things of the most hideous gravity to tell you."

"Speak on," replied Nefert. "To-day I cannot fear the worst. Mena's star, the haruspex told me, stands

under the sign of happiness, and I enquired of the oracle in the temple of Besa, and heard that my husband is prospering. I have prayed in the temple till I am quite content. Only speak!—I know my brother's letter from the camp had no good news in it; the evening before last I saw you had been crying, and yesterday you did not look well; even the pomegranate flowers in your hair did not suit you."

"Your brother," sighed Katuti, "has occasioned me great trouble, and we might through him have suffered deep dishonor—"

"We—dishonor?" exclaimed Nefert, and she nervously clutched at the cat.

"Your brother lost enormous sums at play; to recover them he pledged the mummy of your father—"

"Horrible!" cried Nefert. "We must appeal at once to the king;—I will write to him myself; for Mena's sake he will hear me. Rameses is great and noble, and will not let a house that is faithfully devoted to him fall into disgrace through the reckless folly of a boy. Certainly I will write to him."

She said this in a voice of most childlike confidence, and desired Nemu to wave the fan more gently, as if this concern were settled.

In Katuti's heart surprise and indignation at the unnatural indifference of her daughter were struggling together; but she withheld all blame, and said carelessly:

"We are already released, for my nephew Paaker, as soon as he heard what threatened us, offered me his help; freely and unprompted, from pure goodness of heart and attachment."

'How good of Paaker!" cried Nefert. "He was so

fond of me, and you know, mother, I always stood up for him. No doubt it was for my sake that he behaved so generously!"

The young wife laughed, and pulling the cat's face close to her own, held her nose to its cool little nose, stared into its green eyes, and said, imitating childish talk:

"There now, pussy—how kind people are to your little mistress."

Katuti was vexed at this fresh outburst of her daughter's childish impulses.

"It seems to me," she said, "that you might leave off playing and trifling when I am talking of such serious matters. I have long since observed that the fate of the house to which your father and mother belong is a matter of perfect indifference to you; and yet you would have to seek shelter and protection under its roof if your husband—"

"Well, mother?" asked Nefert raising herself, and breathing more quickly.

As soon as Katuti perceived her daughter's agitation she regretted that she had not more gently led up to the news she had to break to her; for she loved her daughter, and knew that it would give her keen pain.

So she went on more sympathetically—

"You boasted in joke that people are good to you, and it is true; you win hearts by your mere being —by only being what you are. And Mena too loved you tenderly; but 'absence,' says the proverb, 'is the one real enemy,' and Mena—"

"What has Mena done?" Once more Nefert interrupted her mother, and her nostrils quivered.

"Mena," said Katuti, decidedly, "has violated the

truth and esteem which he owes you—he has trodden them under foot, and—"

"Mena?" exclaimed the young wife with flashing eyes; she flung the cat on the floor, and sprang from her couch.

"Yes—Mena," said Katuti firmly. "Your brother writes that he would have neither silver nor gold for his spoil, but took the fair daughter of the prince of the Danaids into his tent. The ignoble wretch!"

"Ignoble wretch!" cried Nefert, and two or three times she repeated her mother's last words. Katuti drew back in horror, for her gentle, docile, childlike daughter stood before her absolutely transfigured beyond all recognition.

She looked like a beautiful demon of revenge; her eyes sparkled, her breath came quickly, her limbs quivered, and with extraordinary strength and rapidity she seized the dwarf by the hand, led him to the door of one of the rooms which opened out of the hall, threw it open, pushed the little man over the threshold, and closed it sharply upon him; then with white lips she came up to her mother.

"An ignoble wretch did you call him?" she cried out with a hoarse husky voice, "an ignoble wretch! Take back your words, mother, take back your words, or—"

Katuti turned paler and paler, and said soothingly:

"The words may sound hard, but he has broken faith with you, and openly dishonored you."

"And shall I believe it?" said Nefert with a scornful laugh. "Shall I believe it, because a scoundrel has written it, who has pawned his father's body and the

honor of his family; because it is told you by that noble and brave gentleman! why a box on the ears from Mena would be the death of him. Look at me, mother, here are my eyes, and if that table there were Mena's tent, and you were Mena, and you took the fairest woman living by the hand and led her into it, and these eyes saw it—aye, over and over again—I would laugh at it—as I laugh at it now; and I should say, 'Who knows what he may have to give her, or to say to her,' and not for one instant would I doubt his truth; for your son is false and Mena is true. Osiris broke faith with Isis*—but Mena may be favored by a hundred women—he will take none to his tent but me!"

"Keep your belief," said Katuti bitterly, "but leave me mine."

"Yours?" said Nefert, and her flushed cheeks turned pale again. "What do you believe? You listen to the worst and basest things that can be said of a man who has overloaded you with benefits! A wretch, bah! an ignoble wretch? Is that what you call a man who lets you dispose of his estate as you please!"

"Nefert," cried Katuti angrily, "I will—"

"Do what you will," interrupted her indignant daughter, "but do not vilify the generous man who has never hindered you from throwing away his property on your son's debts and your own ambition. Since the day before yesterday I have learned that we are not rich; and I have reflected, and I have asked myself what has become of our corn and our cattle, of our sheep and the rents from the farmers. The wretch's estate was not so contemptible; but I tell you plainly I

* See Plutarch, Isis and Osiris.

should be unworthy to be the wife of the noble Mena if I allowed any one to vilify his name under his own roof. Hold to your belief, by all means, but one of us must quit this house—you or I."

At these words Nefert broke into passionate sobs, threw herself on her knees by her couch, hid her face in the cushions, and wept convulsively and without intermission.

Katuti stood behind her, startled, trembling, and not knowing what to say. Was this her gentle, dreamy daughter? Had ever a daughter dared to speak thus to her mother? But was she right or was Nefert? This question was the pressing one; she knelt down by the side of the young wife, put her arm round her, drew her head against her bosom, and whispered pitifully:

"You cruel, hard-hearted child; forgive your poor, miserable mother, and do not make the measure of her wretchedness overflow."

Then Nefert rose, kissed her mother's hand, and went silently into her own room.

Katuti remained alone; she felt as if a dead hand held her heart in its icy grasp, and she muttered to herself—

"Ani is right—nothing turns to good excepting that from which we expect the worst."

She held her hand to her head, as if she had heard something too strange to be believed. Her heart went after her daughter, but instead of sympathizing with her she collected all her courage, and deliberately recalled all the reproaches that Nefert had heaped upon her. She did not spare herself a single word, and finally she murmured to herself: "She can spoil every thing. For Mena's sake she will sacrifice me and the whole world;

Mena and Rameses are one, and if she discovers what we are plotting she will betray us without a moment's hesitation. Hitherto all has gone on without her seeing it, but to-day something has been unsealed in her —an eye, a tongue, an ear, which have hitherto been closed. She is like a deaf and dumb person, who by a sudden fright is restored to speech and hearing. My favorite child will become the spy of my actions, and my judge."

She gave no utterance to the last words, but she seemed to hear them with her inmost ear; the voice that could speak to her thus, startled and frightened her, and solitude was in itself a torture; she called the dwarf, and desired him to have her litter prepared, as she intended going to the temple, and visiting the wounded who had been sent home from Syria.

"And the handkerchief for the Regent?" asked the little man.

"It was a pretext," said Katuti. "He wishes to speak to you about the matter which you know of with regard to Paaker. What is it?"

"Do not ask," replied Nemu, "I ought not to betray it. By Besa, who protects us dwarfs,* it is better that thou shouldst never know it."

"For to-day I have learned enough that is new to me," retorted Katuti. "Now go to Ani, and if you are able to throw Paaker entirely into his power—good—I will give—but what have I to give away? I will be grateful to you; and when we have gained our end I will set you free and make you rich."

Nemu kissed her robe, and said in a low voice: "What is the end?"

* Perhaps on account of his dwarfish figure.

"You know what Ani is striving for," answered the widow. "And I have but one wish!"

"And that is?"

"To see Paaker in Mena's place."

"Then our wishes are the same," said the dwarf and he left the Hall.

Katuti looked after him and muttered:

"It must be so. For if every thing remains as it was and Mena comes home and demands a reckoning—it is not to be thought of! It must not be!"

CHAPTER XX.

As Nemu, on his way back from his visit to Ani, approached his mistress's house, he was detained by a boy, who desired him to follow him to the stranger's quarter. Seeing him hesitate, the messenger showed him the ring of his mother Hekt, who had come into the town on business, and wanted to speak with him.

Nemu was tired, for he was not accustomed to walking; his ass was dead, and Katuti could not afford to give him another. Half of Mena's beasts had been sold, and the remainder barely sufficed for the field-labor.

At the corners of the busiest streets, and on the market-places, stood boys with asses which they hired out for a small sum;* but Nemu had parted with his last money for a garment and a new wig, so that he

* In the streets of modern Egyptian towns asses stand saddled for hire. On the monuments only foreigners are represented as riding on asses, but these beasts are mentioned in almost every list of the possessions of the nobles, even in very early times, and the number is often considerable. There is a picture extant of a rich old man who rides on a seat supported on the backs of two donkeys. Lepsius, Denkmäler, part II. 126.

might appear worthily attired before the Regent. In former times his pocket had never been empty, for Mena had thrown him many a ring of silver, or even of gold, but his restless and ambitious spirit wasted no regrets on lost luxuries. He remembered those years of superfluity with contempt, and as he puffed and panted on his way through the dust, he felt himself swell with satisfaction.

The Regent had admitted him to a private interview, and the little man had soon succeeded in riveting his attention; Ani had laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks at Nemu's description of Paaker's wild passion, and he had proved himself in earnest over the dwarf's further communications, and had met his demands half-way. Nemu felt like a duck hatched on dry land, and put for the first time into water; like a bird hatched in a cage, and that for the first time is allowed to spread its wings and fly. He would have swum or have flown willingly to death if circumstances had not set a limit to his zeal and energy.

Bathed in sweat and coated with dust, he at last reached the gay tent in the stranger's quarter,* where the sorceress Hekt was accustomed to alight when she came over to Thebes.

He was considering far-reaching projects, dreaming of possibilities, devising subtle plans—rejecting them as too subtle, and supplying their place with others more feasible and less dangerous; altogether the little diplomatist had no mind for the motley tribes which here surrounded him. He had passed the temple in

* Herodotus mentions the Tyrian quarter of Memphis, which lay southwards from the temple of Ptah, and in which ξεινὴ Ἀφροδίτη, *i. e.* the foreign Aphrodite, was worshipped. Brugsch has identified it with the quarter of the city called the "world of life."

which the people of Kaft adored their goddess Astarte,* and the sanctuary of Seth, where they sacrificed to Baal,** without letting himself be disturbed by the dancing devotees or the noise of cymbals and music which issued from their enclosures. The tents and slightly-built wooden houses of the dancing girls did not tempt him. Besides their inhabitants, who in the evening tricked themselves out in tinsel finery to lure the youth of Thebes into extravagance and folly, and spent their days in sleeping till sun-down, only the gambling booths drove a brisk business; and the guard of police had much trouble to restrain the soldier, who had staked and lost all his prize money, or the sailor, who thought himself cheated, from such outbreaks of rage and despair as must end in bloodshed. Drunken men lay in front of the taverns, and others were doing their utmost, by repeatedly draining their beakers, to follow their example.

Nothing was yet to be seen of the various musicians, jugglers, fire-eaters, serpent-charmers, and conjurers, who in the evening displayed their skill in this part of the town, which at all times had the aspect of a never-

* Astarte, the great goddess of the Phœnicians, frequently appears on the monuments as Sechet. At Edfu she is represented with the lioness-head, and drives a chariot drawn by horses. Her name frequently occurs in papyri of the time of our story with that of Rameses II., as well as of a favorite horse and dog of the king's.

** According to the papyrus Sallier I., the Hyksos-king Apepi-Apophis "chose Seth for his lord, and worshipped no other god in Egypt." In later times the Semitic god Baal was called Seth by the Egyptians themselves, as we learn from the treaty of peace of Rameses II. with the Cheta, found at Karnak, in which on one side the Seth of the Cheta (a different god), and Astarte are invoked, and on the other the Egyptian gods. The form "Sutech" occurs with "Seth.

Seth-Typhon is discussed in "Études Égyptologiques" by Diestel, "Voyage d'un Égyptien" by Chabas, "Ægypten und die Bücher Moses" by Ebers, and lately by E. Meyer, in his "Dissertation über Seth." The Phœnician religion is exhaustively treated by Movers.

ceasing fair. But these delights, which Nemu had passed a thousand times, had never had any temptation for him. Women and gambling were not to his taste; that which could be had simply for the taking, without trouble or exertion, offered no charms to his fancy; he had no fear of the ridicule of the dancing-women, and their associates—indeed, he occasionally sought them, for he enjoyed a war of words, and he was of opinion that no one in Thebes could beat him at having the last word. Other people, indeed, shared this opinion, and not long before Paaker's steward had said of Nemu:

"Our tongues are cudgels, but the little one's is a dagger."

The destination of the dwarf was a very large and gaudy tent, not in any way distinguished from a dozen others in its neighborhood. The opening which led into it was wide, but at present closed by a hanging of coarse stuff.

Nemu squeezed himself in between the edge of the tent and the yielding door, and found himself in an almost circular tent with many angles, and with its cone-shaped roof supported on a pole by way of a pillar.

Pieces of shabby carpet lay on the dusty soil that was the floor of the tent, and on these squatted some gaily-clad girls, whom an old woman was busily engaged in dressing. She painted the finger and toe-nails of the fair ones with orange-colored Hennah, blackened their brows and eye-lashes with Mestem* to give brilliancy to their glance, painted their cheeks with white and red, and anointed their hair with scented oil.

* Antimony.

It was very hot in the tent, and not one of the girls spoke a word; they sat perfectly still before the old woman, and did not stir a finger, excepting now and then to take up one of the porous clay pitchers, which stood on the ground, for a draught of water, or to put a pill of Kyphi between their painted lips.

Various musical instruments leaned against the walls of the tent, hand-drums, pipes and lutes and four tambourines lay on the ground; on the vellum of one slept a cat, whose graceful kittens played with the bells in the hoop of another.

An old negro-woman went in and out of the little back-door of the tent, pursued by flies and gnats, while she cleared away a variety of earthen dishes with the remains of food—pomegranate-peelings, bread-crumbs, and garlic-tops—which had been lying on one of the carpets for some hours since the girls had finished their dinner.

Old Hekt sat apart from the girls on a painted trunk, and she was saying, as she took a parcel from her wallet:

"Here, take this incense, and burn six seeds of it, and the vermin will all disappear—" she pointed to the flies that swarmed round the platter in her hand. "If you like I will drive away the mice too and draw the snakes out of their holes better than the priests."*

"Keep your magic to yourself," said a girl in a husky voice. "Since you muttered your words over me, and gave me that drink to make me grow slight and lissom again, I have been shaken to pieces with a cough at night, and turn faint when I am dancing."

* Recipes for exterminating noxious creatures are found in the papyrus in my possession.

"But look how slender you have grown," answered Hekt, "and your cough will soon be well."

"When I am dead," whispered the girl to the old woman. "I know that—most of us end so."

The witch shrugged her shoulders, and perceiving the dwarf she rose from her seat.

The girls too noticed the little man, and set up the indescribable cry, something like the cackle of hens, which is peculiar to Eastern women when something tickles their fancy. Nemu was well known to them, for his mother always stayed in their tent whenever she came to Thebes, and the gayest of them cried out:

"You are grown, little man, since the last time you were here."

"So are you," said the dwarf sharply; "but only as far as big words are concerned."

"And you are as wicked as you are small," retorted the girl.

"Then my wickedness is small too," said the dwarf laughing, "for I am little enough! Good morning, girls —may Besa help your beauty. Good day, mother—you sent for me?"

The old woman nodded; the dwarf perched himself on the chest beside her, and they began to whisper together.

"How dusty and tired you are," said Hekt. "I do believe you have come on foot in the burning sun."

"My ass is dead," replied Nemu, "and I have no money to hire a steed."

"A foretaste of future splendor," said the old

woman with a sneer. "What have you succeeded in doing?"

"Paaker has saved us," replied Nemu, "and I have just come from a long interview with the Regent."

"Well?"

"He will renew your letter of freedom, if you will put Paaker into his power."

"Good—good. I wish he would make up his mind to come and seek me—in disguise, of course. I would—"

"He is very timid, and it would not be wise to suggest to him anything so unpracticable."

"Hm—" said Hekt, "perhaps you are right, for when we have to demand a good deal it is best only to ask for what is feasible. One rash request often altogether spoils the patron's inclination for granting favors."

"What else has occurred?"

"The Regent's army has conquered the Ethiopians, and is coming home with rich spoils."

"People may be bought with treasure," muttered the old woman, "good—good!"

"Paaker's sword is sharpened; I would give no more for my master's life, than I have in my pocket—and you know why I came on foot through the dust."

"Well, you can ride home again," replied his mother, giving the little man a small silver ring. "Has the pioneer seen Nefert again?"

"Strange things have happened," said the dwarf, and he told his mother what had taken place between Katuti and Nefert. Nemu was a good listener, and had not forgotten a word of what he had heard.

The old woman listened to his story with the most eager attention.

"Well, well," she muttered, "here is another extraordinary thing. What is common to all men is generally disgustingly similar in the palace and in the hovel. Mothers are everywhere she-apes, who with pleasure let themselves be tormented to death by their children, who repay them badly enough, and the wives generally open their ears wide if any one can tell them of some misbehavior of their husbands! But that is not the way with your mistress."

The old woman looked thoughtful, and then she continued:

"In point of fact this can be easily explained, and is not at all more extraordinary than it is that those tired girls should sit yawning. You told me once that it was a pretty sight to see the mother and daughter side by side in their chariot when they go to a festival or the Panegyrai;* Katuti, you said, took care that the colors of their dresses and the flowers in their hair should harmonize. For which of them is the dress first chosen on such occasions?"

"Always for the lady Katuti, who never wears any but certain colors," replied Nemu quickly.

"You see," said the witch laughing, "indeed it must be so. That mother always thinks of herself first, and of the objects she wishes to gain; but they hang high, and she treads down everything that is in her way—even her own child—to reach them. She will contrive that Paaker shall be the ruin of Mena, as sure as I have ears to hear with, for that woman is capable of playing any tricks with her daughter, and would

* Festal assemblies with fairs.

marry her to that lame dog yonder if it would advance her ambitious schemes."

"But Nefert!" said Nemu. "You should have seen her. The dove became a lioness."

"Because she loves Mena as much as her mother loves herself," answered Hekt. "As the poets say, 'she is full of him.' It is really true of her, there is no room for any thing else. She cares for one only, and woe to those who come between him and her!"

"I have seen other women in love," said Nemu, "but—"

"But," exclaimed the old witch with such a sharp laugh that the girls all looked up, "they behaved differently to Nefert—I believe you, for there is not one in a thousand that loves as she does. It is a sickness that gives raging pain—like a poisoned arrow in an open wound, and devours all that is near it like a fire-brand, and is harder to cure than the disease which is killing that coughing wench. To be possessed by that demon of anguish is to suffer the torture of the damned—or else," and her voice sank to softness, "to be more blest than the Gods, happy as they are. I know—I know it all; for I was once one of the possessed, one of a thousand, and even now—"

"Well?" asked the dwarf.

"Folly!" muttered the witch, stretching herself as if awaking from sleep. "Madness! He—is long since dead, and if he were not it would be all the same to me. All men are alike, and Mena will be like the rest."

"But Paaker surely is governed by the demon you describe?" asked the dwarf.

"May be," replied his mother; "but he is self-willed

to madness. He would simply give his life for the thing because it is denied him. If your mistress Nefert were his, perhaps he might be easier; but what is the use of chattering? I must go over to the gold tent, where everyone goes now who has any money in their purse, to speak to the mistress—"

"What do you want with her?" interrupted Nemu.

"Little Uarda over there," said the old woman, "will soon be quite well again. You have seen her lately; is she not grown beautiful, wonderfully beautiful? Now I shall see what the good woman will offer me if I take Uarda to her? the girl is as light-footed as a gazelle, and with good training would learn to dance in a very few weeks."

Nemu turned perfectly white.

"That you shall not do," said he positively.

"And why not?" asked the old woman, "if it pays well."

"Because I forbid it," said the dwarf in a choked voice.

"Bless me," laughed the woman; "you want to play my lady Nefert, and expect me to take the part of her mother Katuti. But, seriously, having seen the child again, have you any fancy for her?"

"Yes," replied Nemu. "If we gain our end, Katuti will make me free, and make me rich. Then I will buy Pinem's grandchild, and take her for my wife. I will build a house near the hall of justice, and give the complainants and defendants private advice, like the hunch-back Sent, who now drives through the streets in his own chariot."

"Hm—" said his mother, "that might have done very well, but perhaps it is too late. When the child

had fever she talked about the young priest who was sent from the House of Seti by Ameni. He is a fine tall fellow, and took a great interest in her; he is a gardener's son, named Pentaur."

"Pentaur?" said the dwarf. "Pentaur? He has the haughty air and the expression of the old Mohar, and would be sure to rise; but they are going to break his proud neck for him."

"So much the better," said the old woman. "Uarda would be just the wife for you, she is good and steady, and no one knows—"

"What?" said Nemu.

"Who her mother was—for she was not one of us. She came here from foreign parts, and when she died she left a trinket with strange letters on it. We must show it to one of the prisoners of war, after you have got her safe; perhaps they could make out the queer inscription. She comes of a good stock, that I am certain; for Uarda is the very living image of her mother, and as soon as she was born, she looked like the child of a great man. You smile, you idiot! Why thousands of infants have been in my hands, and if one was brought to me wrapped in rags I could tell if its parents were noble or base-born. The shape of the foot shows it—and other marks. Uarda may stay where she is, and I will help you. If anything new occurs let me know."

CHAPTER XXI.

When Nemu, riding on an ass this time, reached home, he found neither his mistress nor Nefert within.

The former was gone, first to the temple, and then into the town; Nefert, obeying an irresistible impulse, had gone to her royal friend Bent-Anat.

The king's palace was more like a little town than a house.* The wing in which the Regent resided, and which we have already visited, lay away from the river; while the part of the building which was used by the royal family commanded the Nile.

It offered a splendid, and at the same time a pleasing prospect to the ships which sailed by at its foot, for it stood, not a huge and solitary mass in the midst of the surrounding gardens, but in picturesque groups of various outline. On each side of a large structure, which contained the state rooms and banqueting hall, three rows of pavilions of different sizes extended in symmetrical order. They were connected with each other by colonnades, or by little bridges, under which flowed canals, that watered the gardens and gave the palace-grounds the aspect of a town built on islands.

The principal part of the castle of the Pharaohs was constructed of light Nile-mud bricks and elegantly carved woodwork, but the extensive walls which surrounded it were ornamented and fortified with towers, in front of which heavily armed soldiers stood on guard.

The walls and pillars, the galleries and colonnades, even the roofs, blazed in many colored paints, and at every gate stood tall masts, from which red and

* The view accepted by many writers, that the temples were also the king's palace, is erroneous. In the best-preserved temples, as at Dendera and Edfu, we know the purpose of the several rooms, and they were all devoted to the service of the gods. We learn from the monuments that the kings inhabited extensive buildings surrounded by gardens, and constructed of light materials. The palaces resembled, in fact, the houses of the nobles, but were on a larger scale.

blue flags fluttered when the king was residing there. Now they stood up with only their brass spikes, which were intended to intercept and conduct the lightning.*

To the right of the principal building, and entirely surrounded with thick plantations of trees, stood the houses of the royal ladies, some mirrored in the lake which they surrounded at a greater or less distance. In this part of the grounds were the king's storehouses in endless rows, while behind the centre building, in which the Pharaoh resided, stood the barracks for his body-guard and the treasuries. The left wing was occupied by the officers of the household, the innumerable servants and the horses and chariots of the sovereign.

In spite of the absence of the king himself, brisk activity reigned in the palace of Rameses, for a hundred gardeners watered the turf, the flower-borders, the shrubs and trees; companies of guards passed hither and thither; horses were being trained and broken; and the princess's wing was as full as a beehive of servants and maids, officers and priests.

Nefert was well known in this part of the palace. The gate-keepers let her litter pass unchallenged, with low bows; once in the garden, a lord in waiting received her, and conducted her to the chamberlain, who, after a short delay, introduced her into the sitting-room of the king's favorite daughter.

Bent-Anat's apartment was on the first floor of the pavilion, next to the king's residence. Her dead mother had inhabited these pleasant rooms, and when the princess was grown up it made the king happy to feel that she was near him; so the beautiful house of the wife who had too early departed, was given up to her, and

* According to an inscription first interpreted by Dümichen.

at the same time, as she was his eldest daughter, many privileges were conceded to her, which hitherto none but queens had enjoyed.

The large room, in which Nefert found the princess, commanded the river. A doorway, closed with light curtains, opened on to a long balcony with a finely-worked balustrade of copper-gilt, to which clung a climbing rose with pink flowers.

When Nefert entered the room, Bent-Anat was just having the rustling curtain drawn aside by her waiting-women; for the sun was setting, and at that hour she loved to sit on the balcony, as it grew cooler, and watch with devout meditation the departure of Ra, who, as the grey-haired Tum,* vanished behind the western horizon of the Necropolis in the evening to bestow the blessing of light on the under-world.

Nefert's apartment was far more elegantly appointed than the princess's; her mother and Mena had surrounded her with a thousand pretty trifles. Her carpets were made of sky-blue and silver brocade from Damascus, the seats and couches were covered with stuff embroidered in feathers by the Ethiopian women, which looked like the breasts of birds. The images of the Goddess Hathor, which stood on the house-altar, were of an imitation of emerald, which was called Mafkat, and the other little figures, which were placed near their patroness, were of lapis-lazuli, malachite, agate and bronze, overlaid with gold. On her toilet-table stood a collection of salve-boxes, and cups of ebony and ivory finely carved, and everything was arranged with the utmost taste, and exactly suited Nefert herself.

Bent-Anat's room also suited the owner.

* See note page 9.

It was high and airy, and its furniture consisted in costly but simple necessaries; the lower part of the wall was lined with cool tiles of white and violet earthenware, on each of which was pictured a star, and which, all together, formed a tasteful pattern. Above these the walls were covered with a beautiful dark green material brought from Sais, and the same stuff was used to cover the long divans by the wall. Chairs and stools, made of cane, stood round a very large table in the middle of this room, out of which several others opened; all handsome, comfortable, and harmonious in aspect, but all betraying that their mistress took small pleasure in trifling decorations. But her chief delight was in finely-grown plants, of which rare and magnificent specimens, artistically arranged on stands, stood in the corners of many of the rooms. In others there were tall obelisks of ebony, which bore saucers for incense, which all the Egyptians loved, and which was prescribed by their physicians to purify and perfume their dwellings. Her simple bedroom would have suited a prince who loved floriculture, quite as well as a princess.

Before all things Bent-Anat loved air and light. The curtains of her windows and doors were only closed when the position of the sun absolutely required it; while in Nefert's rooms, from morning till evening, a dim twilight was maintained.

The princess went affectionately towards the charioteer's wife, who bowed low before her at the threshold; she took her chin with her right hand, kissed her delicate narrow forehead, and said:

"Sweet creature! At last you have come uninvited to see lonely me! It is the first time since our men went away to the war. If Rameses' daughter com-

mands there is no escape, and you come; but of your own free will—"

Nefert raised her large eyes, moist with tears, with an imploring look, and her glance was so pathetic that Bent-Anat interrupted herself, and taking both her hands, exclaimed:

"Do you know who must have eyes exactly like yours? I mean the Goddess from whose tears, when they fall on the earth, flowers spring."

Nefert's eyes fell and she blushed deeply.

"I wish," she murmured, "that my eyes might close for ever, for I am very unhappy." And two large tears rolled down her cheeks.

"What has happened to you, my darling?" asked the princess sympathetically, and she drew her towards her, putting her arm round her like a sick child.

Nefert glanced anxiously at the chamberlain, and the ladies in waiting who had entered the room with her, and Bent-Anat understood the look; she requested her attendants to withdraw, and when she was alone with her sad little friend—"Speak now," she said. "What saddens your heart? how comes this melancholy expression on your dear baby face? Tell me, and I will comfort you, and you shall be my bright thoughtless plaything once more."

"Thy plaything!" answered Nefert, and a flash of displeasure sparkled in her eyes. "Thou art right to call me so, for I deserve no better name. I have submitted all my life to be nothing but the plaything of others."

"But, Nefert, I do not know you again," cried Bent-Anat. "Is this my gentle amiable dreamer?"

"That is the word I wanted," said Nefert in a low-

tone. "I slept, and dreamed, and dreamed on—till Mena awoke me; and when he left me I went to sleep again, and for two whole years I have lain dreaming; but to-day I have been torn from my dreams so suddenly and roughly, that I shall never find any rest again."

While she spoke, heavy tears fell slowly one after another over her cheeks.

Bent-Anat felt what she saw and heard as deeply as if Nefert were her own suffering child. She lovingly drew the young wife down by her side on the divan, and insisted on Nefert's letting her know all that troubled her spirit.

Katuti's daughter had in the last few hours felt like one born blind, and who suddenly receives his sight. He looks at the brightness of the sun, and the manifold forms of the creation around him, but the beams of the day-star blind his eyes, and the new forms, which he has sought to guess at in his mind, and which throng round him in their rude reality, shock him and pain him. To-day, for the first time, she had asked herself wherefore her mother, and not she herself, was called upon to control the house of which she nevertheless was called the mistress,* and the answer had rung in her ears: "Because Mena thinks you incapable of thought and action." He had often called her his little rose, and she felt now that she was neither more nor less than a flower that blossoms and fades, and only charms the eye by its color and beauty.

"My mother," she said to Bent-Anat, "no doubt loves me, but she has managed badly for Mena, very badly; and I, miserable idiot, slept and dreamed of Mena, and saw and heard nothing of what was happen-

* Mistress of the House is the usual title of the wives of aristocratic Egyptians.

ing to his—to our—inheritance. Now my mother is afraid of my husband, and those whom we fear, says my uncle, we cannot love, and we are always ready to believe evil of those we do not love. So she lends an ear to those people who blame Mena, and say of him that he has driven me out of his heart, and has taken a strange woman to his tent. But it is false and a lie; and I cannot and will not countenance my own mother even, if she embitters and mars what is left to me—what supports me—the breath and blood of my life—my love, my fervent love for my husband."

Bent-Anat had listened to her without interrupting her; she sat by her for a time in silence. Then she said:

"Come out into the gallery; then I will tell you what I think, and perhaps Toth may pour some helpful counsel into my mind. I love you, and I know you well, and though I am not wise, I have my eyes open and a strong hand. Take it, come with me on to the balcony."

A refreshing breeze met the two women as they stepped out into the air. It was evening, and a reviving coolness had succeeded the heat of the day. The buildings and houses already cast long shadows, and numberless boats, with the visitors returning from the Necropolis, crowded the stream that rolled its swollen flood majestically northwards.

Close below lay the verdant garden, which sent odors from the rose-beds up to the princess's balcony. A famous artist had laid it out in the time of Hatasu, and the picture which he had in his mind, when he sowed the seeds and planted the young shoots, was now realized, many decades after his death. He had thought of planning a carpet, on which the palace should seem

to stand. Tiny streams, in bends and curves, formed the outline of the design, and the shapes they enclosed were filled with plants of every size, form, and color; beautiful plats of fresh green turf everywhere represented the groundwork of the pattern, and flower-beds and clumps of shrubs stood out from them in harmonious mixtures of colors, while the tall and rare trees, of which Hatasu's ships* had brought several from Arabia, gave dignity and impressiveness to the whole.

Clear drops sparkled on leaf and flower and blade, for, only a short time before, the garden by Bent-Anat's house had been freshly watered. The Nile beyond surrounded an island, where flourished the well-kept sacred grove of Amon.

The Necropolis on the farther side of the river was also well seen from Bent-Anat's balcony. There stood in long perspective the rows of sphinxes, which led from the landing-place of the festal barges to the gigantic buildings of Amenophis III. with its colossi—the hugest in Thebes—to the House of Seti, and to the temple of Hatasu. There lay the long workshops of the embalmers and closely-packed homes of the inhabitants of the City of the Dead. In the farthest west rose the Libyan mountains with their innumerable graves, and the valley of the kings' tombs took a wide curve behind, concealed by a spur of the hills.

The two women looked in silence towards the west. The sun was near the horizon—now it touched it, now it sank behind the hills; and as the heavens flushed with hues like living gold, blazing rubies, and liquid garnet and amethyst, the evening chant rang out from

* Neha trees brought to Egypt in large tubs are represented in Hatasu's temple at Der el Bahri.

all the temples, and the friends sank on their knees, hid their faces in the bower-rose garlands that clung to the trellis, and prayed with full hearts.

When they rose night was spreading over the landscape, for the twilight is short in Thebes. Here and there a rosy cloud fluttered across the darkening sky, and faded gradually as the evening star appeared.

"I am content," said Bent-Anat. "And you? have you recovered your peace of mind?"

Nefert shook her head. The princess drew her on to a seat, and sank down beside her. Then she began again:

"Your heart is sore, poor child; they have spoilt the past for you, and you dread the future. Let me be frank with you, even if it gives you pain. You are sick, and I must cure you. Will you listen to me?"

"Speak on," said Nefert.

"Speech does not suit me so well as action," replied the princess; "but I believe I know what you need, and can help you. You love your husband; duty calls him from you, and you feel lonely and neglected; that is quite natural. But those whom I love, my father and my brothers, are also gone to the war; my mother is long since dead; the noble woman, whom the king left to be my companion, was laid low a few weeks since by sickness. Look what a half-abandoned spot my house is! Which is the lonelier do you think, you or I?"

"I," said Nefert. "For no one is so lonely as a wife parted from the husband her heart longs after."

"But you trust Mena's love for you?" asked Bent-Anat.

Nefert pressed her hand to her heart and nodded assent:

"And he will return, and with him your happiness."

"I hope so," said Nefert softly.

"And he who hopes," said Bent-Anat, "possesses already the joys of the future. Tell me, would you have changed places with the Gods so long as Mena was with you? No! Then you are most fortunate, for blissful memories—the joys of the past—are yours at any rate. What is the present? I speak of it, and it is no more. Now, I ask you, what joys can I look forward to, and what certain happiness am I justified in hoping for?

"Thou dost not love any one," replied Nefert. "Thou dost follow thy own course, calm and undeviating as the moon above us. The highest joys are unknown to thee, but for the same reason thou dost not know the bitterest pain."

"What pain?" asked the princess.

"The torment of a heart consumed by the fires of Sechet," replied Nefert.

The princess looked thoughtfully at the ground, then she turned her eyes eagerly on her friend.

"You are mistaken," she said; "I know what love and longing are. But you need only wait till a feast-day to wear the jewel that is your own, while my treasure is no more mine than a pearl that I see gleaming at the bottom of the sea."

"Thou canst love!" exclaimed Nefert with joyful excitement. "Oh! I thank Hathor that at last she has touched thy heart. The daughter of Rameses need not even send for the diver to fetch the jewel out of the sea; at a sign from her the pearl will rise of itself, and lie on the sand at her slender feet."

Bent-Anat smiled and kissed Nefert's brow.

"How it excites you," she said, "and stirs your heart and tongue! If two strings are tuned in harmony, and one is struck, the other sounds, my music-master tells me. I believe you would listen to me till morning if I only talked to you about my love. But it was not for that that we came out on the balcony. Now listen! I am as lonely as you, I love less happily than you, the House of Seti threatens me with evil times—and yet I can preserve my full confidence in life and my joy in existence. How can you explain this?"

"We are so very different," said Nefert.

"True," replied Bent-Anat, "but we are both young, both women, and both wish to do right. My mother died, and I have had no one to guide me, for I who for the most part need some one to lead me can already command, and be obeyed. You had a mother to bring you up, who, when you were still a child, was proud of her pretty little daughter, and let her—as it became her so well—dream and play, without warning her against the dangerous propensity. Then Mena courted you. You love him truly, and in four long years he has been with you but a month or two; your mother remained with you, and you hardly observed that she was managing your own house for you, and took all the trouble of the household. You had a great pastime of your own—your thoughts of Mena, and scope for a thousand dreams in your distant love. I know it, Nefert; all that you have seen and heard and felt in these twenty months has centred in him and him alone. Nor is it wrong in itself. The rose tree here, which clings to my balcony, delights us both; but if the gardener did not frequently prune it

and tie it with palm-bast, in this soil, which forces everything to rapid growth, it would soon shoot up so high that it would cover door and window, and I should sit in darkness. Throw this handkerchief over your shoulders, for the dew falls as it grows cooler, and listen to me a little longer!—The beautiful passion of love and fidelity has grown unchecked in your dreamy nature to such a height, that it darkens your spirit and your judgment. Love, a true love, it seems to me, should be a noble fruit-tree, and not a rank weed. I do not blame you, for she who should have been the gardener did not heed—and would not heed—what was happening. Look, Nefert, so long as I wore the lock of youth, I too did what I fancied. I never found any pleasure in dreaming, but in wild games with my brothers, in horses and in falconry;* they often said I had the spirit of a boy, and indeed I would willingly have been a boy."

"Not I—never!" said Nefert.

"You are just a rose—my dearest," said Bent-Anat. "Well! when I was fifteen I was so discontented, so insubordinate and full of all sorts of wild behavior, so dissatisfied in spite of all the kindness and love that surrounded me—but I will tell you what happened. It is four years ago, shortly before your wedding with Mena; my father called me to play draughts.** You know how certainly he could beat the most skilful antagonist; but that day his thoughts were wandering, and I won the game twice following. Full of insolent delight, I jumped up and kissed his great handsome

* In many papyri of the period of this narrative the training of falcons is mentioned.

** At Medinet Habu a picture represents Rameses the Third, not Rameses the Second, playing at draughts with his daughter.

forehead, and cried 'The sublime God, the hero, under whose feet the strange nations writhe,* to whom the priests and the people pray — is beaten by a girl!' He smiled gently, and answered 'The Lords of Heaven are often outdone by the Ladies, and Necheb,** the lady of victory, is a woman.' Then he grew graver, and said: 'You call me a God, my child, but in this only do I feel truly godlike, that at every moment I strive to the utmost to prove myself useful by my labors; here restraining, there promoting, as is needful.*** Godlike I can never be but by doing or producing something great!' These words, Nefert, fell like seeds in my soul. At last I knew what it was that was wanting to me; and when, a few weeks later, my father and your husband took the field with a hundred thousand fighting men, I resolved to be worthy of my godlike father, and in my little circle to be of use too! You do not know all that is done in the houses behind there, under my direction. Three hundred girls spin pure flax, and weave it into bands of linen for the wounds of the soldiers; numbers of children, and old women, gather plants on the mountains, and others sort them according to the instructions of a physician; in the kitchens no banquets are prepared, but fruits are preserved in sugar for the loved ones, and the sick in the camp. Joints of meat are salted, dried, and smoked for the army on its

* A formula often recurring in the reports of victories.

** The Eileithyia of the Greeks. The Goddess of the South, in contradistinction to Buto, the Goddess of the North. She often flies, in the form of a vulture, as the goddess of victory at the head of the troops led to war by the Pharaoh.

*** The crook-shaped staff, and the whip or scourge are emblems rarely missing from the representations of the Pharaohs, and several of the gods; they probably refer to the duty of a king, who must exercise both restraint and coercion.

march through the desert. The butler no longer thinks of drinking-bouts, but brings me wine in great stone jars; we pour it into well-closed skins for the soldiers, and the best sorts we put into strong flasks, carefully sealed with pitch, that they may perform the journey uninjured, and warm and rejoice the hearts of our heroes. All that, and much more, I manage and arrange, and my days pass in hard work. The Gods send me no bright visions in the night, for after utter fatigue I sleep soundly. But I know that I am of use. I can hold my head proudly, because in some degree I resemble my great father; and if the king thinks of me at all I know he can rejoice in the doings of his child. That is the end of it, Nefert—and I only say, Come and join me, work with me, prove yourself of use, and compel Mena to think of his wife, not with affection only, but with pride." Nefert let her head sink slowly on Bent-Anat's bosom, threw her arms round her neck, and wept like a child. At last she composed herself and said humbly:

"Take me to school, and teach me to be useful."

"I knew," said the princess smiling, "that you only needed a guiding hand. Believe me, you will soon learn to couple content and longing. But now hear this! At present go home to your mother, for it is late; and meet her lovingly, for that is the will of the Gods. To-morrow morning I will go to see you, and beg Katuti to let you come to me as companion in the place of my lost friend. The day after to-morrow you will come to me in the palace. You can live in the rooms of my departed friend and begin, as she had done, to help me in my work. May these hours be blest to you!"

CHAPTER XXII.

At the time of this conversation the leech Nebsecht still lingered in front of the hovel of the paraschites, and waited with growing impatience for the old man's return.

At first he trembled for him; then he entirely forgot the danger into which he had thrown him, and only hoped for the fulfilment of his desires, and for wonderful revelations through his investigations of the human heart.

For some minutes he gave himself up to scientific considerations; but he became more and more agitated by anxiety for the paraschites, and by the exciting vicinity of Uarda.

For hours he had been alone with her, for her father and grandmother could no longer stop away from their occupations. The former must go to escort prisoners of war to Hermonthis, and the old woman, since her granddaughter had been old enough to undertake the small duties of the household, had been one of the wailing-women, who, with hair all dishevelled, accompanied the corpse on its way to the grave, weeping, and lamenting, and casting Nile-mud on their forehead and breast. Uarda still lay, when the sun was sinking, in front of the hut.

She looked weary and pale. Her long hair had come undone, and once more got entangled with the straw of her humble couch. If Nebsecht went near her to feel her pulse or to speak to her she carefully turned her face from him.

Nevertheless when the sun disappeared behind the rocks he bent over her once more, and said:

"It is growing cool; shall I carry you indoors?"

"Let me alone," she said crossly. "I am hot, keep farther away. I am no longer ill, and could go indoors by myself if I wished; but grandmother will be here directly."

Nebsecht rose, and sat down on a hen-coop that was some paces from Uarda, and asked stammering:

"Shall I go farther off?"

"Do as you please," she answered.

"You are not kind," he said sadly.

"You sit looking at me," said Uarda, "I cannot bear it; and I am uneasy—for grandfather was quite different this morning from his usual self, and talked strangely about dying, and about the great price that was asked of him for curing me. Then he begged me never to forget him, and was so excited and so strange. He is so long away; I wish he were here, with me."

And with these words Uarda began to cry silently. A nameless anxiety for the paraschites seized Nebsecht, and it struck him to the heart that he had demanded a human life in return for the mere fulfilment of a duty. He knew the law well enough, and knew that the old man would be compelled without respite or delay to empty the cup of poison if he were found guilty of the theft of a human heart.

It was dark: Uarda ceased weeping, and said to the surgeon:

"Can it be possible that he has gone into the city to borrow the great sum of money that thou—or thy temple—demandest for thy medicine? But there is the princess's golden bracelet, and half of father's

prize, and in the chest two years' wages that grandmother had earned by wailing, lie untouched. Is all that not enough?"

The girl's last question was full of resentment and reproach, and Nebsecht, whose perfect sincerity was part of his very being, was silent, as he would not venture to say yes. He had asked more in return for his help than gold or silver. Now he remembered Pentaur's warning, and when the jackals began to bark he took up the fire-stick,* and lighted some fuel that was lying ready. Then he asked himself what Uarda's fate would be without her grandparents, and a strange plan which had floated vaguely before him for some hours, began now to take a distinct outline and intelligible form. He determined if the old man did not return to ask the kolchytes or embalmers to admit him into their guild**—and for the sake of his adroitness they were not likely to refuse him—then he would make Uarda his wife, and live apart from the world, for her, for his studies, and for his new calling, in which he hoped to learn a great deal. What did he care for comfort and proprieties, for recognition from his fellow-men, and a superior position!

He could hope to advance more quickly along the new stony path than on the old beaten track. The impulse to communicate his acquired knowledge to others he did not feel. Knowledge in itself amply satisfied him, and he thought no more of his ties to the House of Seti. For three whole days he had not

* The hieroglyphic sign Sam seems to me to represent the wooden stick used to produce fire (as among some savage tribes) by rapid friction in a hollow piece of wood.

** This guild still existed in Roman times, and we have much information about it in various Greek papyri.

changed his garments, no razor had touched his chin or his scalp, not a drop of water had wetted his hands or his feet. He felt half bewildered and almost as if he had already become an embalmer, nay even a paraschites, one of the most despised of human beings. This self-degradation had an infinite charm, for it brought him down to the level of Uarda, and she, lying near him, sick and anxious, with her dishevelled hair, exactly suited the future which he painted to himself.

"Do you hear nothing?" Uarda asked suddenly.

He listened. In the valley there was a barking of dogs, and soon the paraschites and his wife appeared, and, at the door of their hut, took leave of old Hekt, who had met them on her return from Thebes.

"You have been gone a long time," cried Uarda, when her grandmother once more stood before her. "I have been so frightened."

"The doctor was with you," said the old woman going into the house to prepare their simple meal, while the paraschites knelt down by his granddaughter, and caressed her tenderly, but yet with respect, as if he were her faithful servant rather than her blood-relation.

Then he rose, and gave to Nebsecht, who was trembling with excitement, the bag of coarse linen which he was in the habit of carrying tied to him by a narrow belt.

"The heart is in that," he whispered to the leech; "take it out, and give me back the bag, for my knife is in it, and I want it."

Nebsecht took the heart out of the covering with trembling hands, and laid it carefully down. Then he

felt in the breast of his dress, and going up to the paraschites he whispered:

"Here, take the writing, hang it round your neck, and when you die I will have the book of scripture wrapped up in your mummy cloths like a great man. But that is not enough. The property that I inherited is in the hands of my brother, who is a good man of business, and I have not touched the interest for ten years. I will send it to you, and you and your wife shall enjoy an old age free from care."

The paraschites had taken the little bag with the strip of papyrus, and heard the leech to the end. Then he turned from him saying: "Keep thy money; we are quits. That is if the child gets well," he added humbly.

"She is already half cured," stammered Nebsecht. "But why will you—why won't you accept—"

"Because till to day I have never begged nor borrowed," said the paraschites, "and I will not begin in my old age. Life for life. But what I have done this day not Rameses with all his treasure could repay."

Nebsecht looked down, and knew not how to answer the old man.

His wife now came out; she set a bowl of lentils that she had hastily warmed before the two men, with radishes and onions,* then she helped Uarda, who did not need to be carried, into the house, and invited Nebsecht to share their meal. He accepted her invitation, for he had eaten nothing since the previous evening.

* Radishes, onions, and garlic were the hors-d'œuvre of an Egyptian dinner. 1,600 talents worth were consumed, according to Herodotus, during the building of the pyramid of Cheops = £360,000.

When the old woman had once more disappeared indoors, he asked the paraschites:

"Whose heart is it that you have brought me, and how did it come into your hands?"

"Tell me first," said the other, "why thou hast laid such a heavy sin upon my soul?"

"Because I want to investigate the structure of the human heart," said Nebsecht, "so that, when I meet with diseased hearts, I may be able to cure them."

The paraschites looked for a long time at the ground in silence; then he said—

"Art thou speaking the truth?"

"Yes," replied the leech with convincing emphasis.

"I am glad," said the old man, "for thou givest help to the poor."

"As willingly as to the rich!" exclaimed Nebsecht. "But tell me now where you got the heart."

"I went into the house of the embalmer," said the old man, after he had selected a few large flints, to which, with crafty blows, he gave the shape of knives, "and there I found three bodies in which I had to make the eight prescribed incisions with my flint-knife. When the dead lie there undressed on the wooden bench they all look alike, and the begger lies as still as the favorite son of a king. But I knew very well who lay before me. The strong old body in the middle of the table was the corpse of the Superior of the temple of Hatasu, and beyond, close by each other, were laid a stone-mason of the Necropolis, and a poor girl from the strangers' quarter, who had died of consumption—two miserable wasted figures. I had known the Prophet well, for I had met him a hundred times in his gilt litter, and we always called him Rui,

the rich. I did my duty by all three, I was driven away with the usual stoning, and then I arranged the inward parts of the bodies with my mates. Those of the Prophet are to be preserved later in an alabaster canopus,* those of the mason and the girl were put back in their bodies.

"Then I went up to the three bodies, and I asked myself, to which I should do such a wrong as to rob him of his heart. I turned to the two poor ones, and I hastily went up to the sinning girl. Then I heard the voice of the demon that cried out in my heart: 'The girl was poor and despised like you while she walked on Seb,** perhaps she may find compensation and peace in the other world if you do not mutilate her;' and when I turned to the mason's lean corpse, and looked at his hands, which were harder and rougher than my own, the demon whispered the same. Then I stood before the strong, stout corpse of the prophet Rui, who died of apoplexy, and I remembered the honor and the riches that he had enjoyed on earth, and that he at least for a time had known happiness and ease. And as soon as I was alone, I slipped my hand into the bag, and changed the sheep's heart for his.

"Perhaps I am doubly guilty for playing such an accursed trick with the heart of a high-priest; but Rui's body will be hung round with a hundred amulets, Scarabæi*** will be placed over his heart, and holy

* This vase was called canopus at a later date. There were four of them for each mummy.

** Seb is the earth; Plutarch calls Seb Chronos. He is often spoken of as "the father of the gods" on the monuments. He is the god of time, and as the Egyptians regarded matter as eternal, it is not by accident that the sign which represented the earth was also used for eternity.

*** Imitations of the sacred beetle Scarabæus made of various materials were

oil and sacred sentences will preserve him from all the fiends on his road to Amenti,* while no one will devote helping talismans to the poor. And then! thou hast sworn, in that world, in the hall of judgment, to take my guilt on thyself."

Nebsecht gave the old man his hand.

"That I will," said he, "and I should have chosen as you did. Now take this draught, divide it in four parts, and give it to Uarda for four evenings following.** Begin this evening, and by the day after to-morrow I think she will be quite well. I will come again and look after her. Now go to rest, and let me stay a while out here; before the star of Isis*** is extinguished I will be gone, for they have long been expecting me at the temple."

When the paraschites came out of his hut the next morning, Nebsecht had vanished; but a blood-stained cloth that lay by the remains of the fire showed the old man that the impatient investigator had examined the heart of the high-priest during the night, and perhaps cut it up.

Terror fell upon him, and in agony of mind he threw himself on his knees as the golden bark of the Sun-God appeared on the horizon, and prayed fervently, first for Uarda, and then for the salvation of his imperilled soul.

He rose encouraged, convinced himself that his granddaughter was progressing towards recovery, bid farewell to his wife, took his flint knife and his bronze

frequently put into the mummies in the place of the heart. Large specimens have often the 26th, 30th, and 64th chapters of the Book of the Dead engraved on them, as they treat of the heart.

* Under-world. ** A very frequent direction in the medical papyri.
*** Sirius, or the Sothis star.

hook,* and went to the house of the embalmer to follow his dismal calling.

The group of buildings in which the greater number of the corpses from Thebes went through the processes of mummifying, lay on the bare desert-land at some distance from his hovel, southwards from the House of Seti at the foot of the mountain. They occupied by themselves a fairly large space, enclosed by a rough wall of dried mud-bricks.

The bodies were brought in through the great gate towards the Nile, and delivered to the kolchytes,** while the priests, paraschites, and taricheutes,*** bearers and assistants, who here did their daily work, as well as innumerable water-carriers who came up from the Nile, loaded with skins, found their way into the establishment by a side gate.

At the farthest northern end stood a handsome building of wood, with a separate gate, in which the orders of the bereaved were taken, and often indeed those of men still in active life, who thought to provide betimes for their suitable interment.†

The crowd in this house was considerable. About fifty men and women were moving in it at the present moment, all of different ranks; and not only from Thebes but from many smaller towns of Upper Egypt, to make

* The brains of corpses were drawn out of the nose with a hook. Herodotus II., 87.

** The whole guild of embalmers.

*** Salters of the bodies.

† The well-known passages in Herodotus and in Diodorus, are amply supported by the manuscripts of the ancient Egyptians. In Maspero's able work on a papyrus published by Mariette, and on one in the Louvre, entitled, *Mémoires sur quelques papyrus du louvre, and Le rituel de l'embaumement*, we have a mass of hitherto unknown details on the ritual for embalming. Czermak's physiological investigation of two mummies led to very interesting results, and demonstrated the wonderful preservation of even the most delicate tissues. His researches were printed in "Sitzungsberichten der k. k. Akademie der Wissenschaften," Vienna, 1852. The bilingual papyrus of Rhind also affords valuable information.

purchases or to give commissions to the functionaries who were busy here.

This bazaar of the dead was well supplied, for coffins of every form stood up against the walls, from the simplest chest to the richly gilt and painted coffer, in form resembling a mummy. On wooden shelves lay endless rolls of coarse and fine linen, in which the limbs of the mummies were enveloped, and which were manufactured by the people of the embalming establishment under the protection of the tutelar goddesses of weavers, Neith, Isis and Nephthys, though some were ordered from a distance, particularly from Sais.

There was free choice for the visitors of this pattern-room in the matter of mummy-cases and cloths, as well as of necklets, scarabæi, statuettes, Uza-eyes, girdles, head-rests, triangles, split-rings, staves, and other symbolic objects, which were attached to the dead as sacred amulets, or bound up in the wrappings.

There were innumerable stamps of baked clay, which were buried in the earth to show any one who might dispute the limits, how far each grave extended, images of the gods, which were laid in the sand to purify and sanctify* it—for by nature it belonged to Seth-Typhon—as well as the figures called Schebti, which were either enclosed several together in little boxes, or laid separately in the grave; it was supposed that they would help the dead to till the fields of the blessed with the pick-axe, plough, and seed-bag which they carried on their shoulders.

The widow and the steward of the wealthy Su-

* The purpose of the amulets is in most cases known, as almost every one has a chapter of the book of the dead devoted to it. The little clay cones and images are found in vast numbers, and may be met with in every Museum.

perior of the temple of Hatasu, and with them a priest of high rank, were in eager discussion with the officials of the embalming-house, and were selecting the most costly of the patterns of mummy-cases which were offered to their inspection, the finest linen, and amulets of malachite, and lapis-lazuli, of blood-stone, carnelian and green felspar,* as well as the most elegant alabaster canopi for the deceased; his body was to be enclosed first in a sort of case of papier-maché, and then in a wooden and a stone coffin. They wrote his name on a wax tablet which was ready for the purpose, with those of his parents, his wife and children, and all his titles; they ordered what verses should be written on his coffin, what on the papyrus-rolls to be enclosed in it, and what should be set out above his name. With regard to the inscription on the walls of the tomb, the pedestal of the statue to be placed there and the face of the stele** to be erected in it, yet further particulars would be given; a priest of the temple of Seti was charged to write them, and to draw up a catalogue of the rich offerings of the survivors. The last could be done later, when, after the division of the property, the amount of the fortune he had left could be ascertained. The mere mummifying of the body with the finest oils and essences, cloths, amulets, and cases, would cost a talent of silver, without the stone sarcophagus.***

The widow wore a long mourning robe, her forehead was lightly daubed with Nile-mud, and in the midst of her chaffering with the functionaries of the embalming-

* The use of this material proves the extent of commerce in these early times, for green felspar is now known to be found only in countries remote from Egypt.

** Stone tablet with round pediment.

*** According to Diodorus I., 91, first class embalming cost one silver talent, second class twenty minæ.

house, whose prices she complained of as enormous and rapacious, from time to time she broke out into a loud wail of grief—as the occasion demanded.

More modest citizens finished their commissions sooner, though it was not unusual for the income of a whole year to be sacrificed for the embalming of the head of a household—the father or the mother of a family. The mummifying of the poor was cheap, and that of the poorest had to be provided by the kolchytes as a tribute to the king, to whom also they were obliged to pay a tax in linen from their looms.

This place of business was carefully separated from the rest of the establishment, which none but those who were engaged in the processes carried on there were on any account permitted to enter. The kolchytes formed a closely-limited guild at the head of which stood a certain number of priests, and from among them the masters of the many thousand members were chosen. This guild was highly respected, even the taricheutes, who were entrusted with the actual work of embalming, could venture to mix with the other citizens, although in Thebes itself people always avoided them with a certain horror; only the paraschites, whose duty it was to open the body, bore the whole curse of uncleanness. Certainly the place where these people fulfilled their office was dismal enough.

The stone chamber in which the bodies were opened, and the halls in which they were prepared with salt, had adjoining them a variety of laboratories and depositaries for drugs and preparations of every description.

In a court-yard, protected from the rays of the sun only by an awning, was a large walled bason, contain-

ing a solution of natron, in which the bodies were salted, and they were then dried in a stone vault, artificially supplied with hot air.

The little wooden houses of the weavers, as well as the work-shops of the case-joiners and decorators, stood in numbers round the pattern-room; but the farthest off, and much the largest of the buildings of the establishment, was a very long low structure, solidly built of stone and well roofed in, where the prepared bodies were enveloped in their cerements, tricked out in amulets, and made ready for their journey to the next world. What took place in this building—into which the laity were admitted, but never for more than a few minutes—was to the last degree mysterious, for here the gods themselves appeared to be engaged with the mortal bodies.

Out of the windows which opened on the street, recitations, hymns, and lamentations sounded night and day. The priests who fulfilled their office here wore masks like the divinities of the under-world.* Many were the representatives of Anubis, with the jackal-head, assisted by boys with masks of the so-called child-Horus. At the head of each mummy stood or squatted a wailing-woman with the emblems of Nephthys, and one at its feet with those of Isis.

Every separate limb of the deceased was dedicated to a particular divinity by the aid of holy oils, charms, and sentences; a specially prepared cloth was wrapped round each muscle, every drug and every

* There are many indications of this in the tomb paintings, and a papyrus (III. of the museum at Bulaq) confirms the idea. The art of moulding masks in a paste resembling papier-maché was early known to the Egyptians, and such a mask of the dead is not unfrequently found at the head of mummy cases.

bandage owed its origin to some divinity, and the confusion of sounds, of disguised figures, and of various perfumes, had a stupefying effect on those who visited this chamber. It need not be said that the whole embalming establishment and its neighborhood was enveloped in a cloud of powerful resinous fumes, of sweet attar, of lasting musk, and pungent spices.

When the wind blew from the west it was wafted across the Nile to Thebes, and this was regarded as an evil omen, for from the south-west comes the wind that enfeebles the energy of men—the fatal simoon.

In the court of the pattern-house stood several groups of citizens from Thebes, gathered round different individuals, to whom they were expressing their sympathy. A new-comer, the superintendent of the victims of the temple of Amon, who seemed to be known to many and was greeted with respect, announced, even before he went to condole with Rui's widow, in a tone full of horror at what had happened, that an omen, significant of the greatest misfortune, had occurred in Thebes, in a spot no less sacred than the very temple of Amon himself.

Many inquisitive listeners stood round him while he related that the Regent Ani, in his joy at the victory of his troops in Ethiopia, had distributed wine with a lavish hand to the garrison of Thebes, and also to the watchmen of the temple of Amon, and that, while the people were carousing, wolves* had broken into the

* Wolves have now disappeared from Egypt; they were sacred animals, and were worshipped and buried at Lykopolis, the present Siut, where mummies of wolves have been found. Herodotus says that if a wolf was found dead he was buried, and Aelian states that the herb Lykoktonon, which was poisonous to wolves, might on no account be brought into the city, where they were held sacred. The wolf numbered among the sacred animals is the canis lupaster, which exists in Egypt at the present day. Besides this species there are three varieties of wild dogs, the jackal, fox, and fenek, canis cerda.

stable of the sacred rams.* Some were killed, but the noblest ram, which Rameses himself had sent as a gift from Mendes when he set out for the war—the magnificent beast which Amon had chosen as the tenement of his spirit,** was found, torn in pieces, by the soldiers, who immediately terrified the whole city with the news. At the same hour news had come from Memphis that the sacred bull Apis was dead.

All the people who had collected round the priest, broke out into a far-sounding cry of woe, in which he himself and Rui's widow vehemently joined.

The buyers and functionaries rushed out of the pattern-room, and from the mummy-house the tari-cheutes, paraschites and assistants; the weavers left their looms, and all, as soon as they had learned what had happened, took part in the lamentations, howling and wailing, tearing their hair and covering their faces with dust.

The noise was loud and distracting, and when its violence diminished, and the workpeople went back to their business, the east wind brought the echo of the cries of the dwellers in the Necropolis, perhaps too, those of the citizens of Thebes itself.

"Bad news," said the inspector of the victims, "cannot fail to reach us soon from the king and the army; he will regret the death of the ram which we

* There was also a bull which was sacred to Amon.

** The ram was especially worshipped at Mendes. The ruins of this city have been found at a short distance from Mansura in the Delta, and Brugsch has interpreted some inscriptions which were found there, and which throw new light on the worship of the ram, and on the accounts of it which have been handed down to us. The ram is called "Ba," which is also the name for the Soul, and the sacred rams were supposed to be the living embodiment of the soul of Ra.

called by his name more than that of Apis. It is a bad—a very bad omen."

"My lost husband Rui, who rests in Osiris, foresaw it all," said the widow. "If only I dared to speak I could tell a good deal that many might find unpleasant."

The inspector of sacrifices smiled, for he knew that the late superior of the temple of Hatasu had been an adherent of the old royal family, and he replied:

"The Sun of Rameses may be for a time covered with clouds, but neither those who fear it nor those who desire it will live to see its setting."

The priest coldly saluted the lady, and went into the house of a weaver in which he had business, and the widow got into her litter which was waiting at the gate.

The old paraschites Pinem had joined with his fellows in the lamentation for the sacred beasts, and was now sitting on the hard pavement of the dissecting room to eat his morsel of food—for it was noon.

The stone room in which he was eating his meal was badly lighted; the daylight came through a small opening in the roof, over which the sun stood perpendicularly, and a shaft of bright rays, in which danced the whirling motes, shot down through the twilight on to the stone pavement. Mummy-cases leaned against all the walls, and on smooth polished slabs lay bodies covered with coarse cloths. A rat scudded now and then across the floor, and from the wide cracks between the stones sluggish scorpions crawled out.

The old paraschites was long since blunted to the horror which pervaded this locality. He had spread a coarse napkin, and carefully laid on it the provisions which his wife had put into his satchel; first half a cake of bread, then a little salt, and finally a radish.

But the bag was not yet empty.

He put his hand in and found a piece of meat wrapped up in two cabbage-leaves. Old Hekt had brought a leg of a gazelle from Thebes for Uarda, and he now saw that the women had put a piece of it into his little sack for his refreshment. He looked at the gift with emotion, but he did not venture to touch it, for he felt as if in doing so he should be robbing the sick girl. While eating the bread and the radish he contemplated the piece of meat as if it were some costly jewel, and when a fly dared to settle on it he drove it off indignantly.

At last he tasted the meat, and thought of many former noon-day meals, and how he had often found a flower in the satchel, that Uarda had placed there to please him, with the bread. His kind old eyes filled with tears, and his whole heart swelled with gratitude and love. He looked up, and his glance fell on the table, and he asked himself how he would have felt if instead of the old priest, robbed of his heart, the sunshine of his old age, his granddaughter, were lying there motionless. A cold shiver ran over him, and he felt that his own heart would not have been too great a price to pay for her recovery. And yet! In the course of his long life he had experienced so much suffering and wrong, that he could not imagine any hope of a better lot in the other world. Then he drew out the bond Nebsecht had given him, held

it up with both hands, as if to show it to the Immortals, and particularly to the judges in the hall of truth and judgment, that they might not reckon with him for the crime he had committed—not for himself but for another—and that they might not refuse to justify Rui, whom he had robbed of his heart.

While he thus lifted his soul in devotion, matters were getting warm outside the dissecting room. He thought he heard his name spoken, and scarcely had he raised his head to listen when a taricheut came in and desired him to follow him.

In front of the rooms, filled with resinous odors and incense, in which the actual process of embalming was carried on, a number of taricheutes were standing and looking at an object in an alabaster bowl. The knees of the old man knocked together as he recognized the heart of the beast which he had substituted for that of the Prophet.

The chief of the taricheutes asked him whether he had opened the body of the dead priest.

Pinem stammered out "Yes."

Whether this was his heart?

The old man nodded affirmatively.

The taricheutes looked at each other, whispered together; then one of them went away, and returned soon with the inspector of victims from the temple of Amon, whom he had found in the house of the weaver, and the chief of the kolchytes.

"Show me the heart," said the superintendent of the sacrifices as he approached the vase. "I can decide in the dark if you have seen rightly. I examine a hundred animals every day. Give it here!—By all the Gods of Heaven and Hell that is the heart of a ram!"

"It was found in the breast of Rui," said one of the taricheutes decisively. "It was opened yesterday in the presence of us all by this old paraschites."

"It is extraordinary," said the priest of Amon. "And incredible. But perhaps an exchange was effected.—Did you slaughter any victims here yesterday or—?"

"We are purifying ourselves," the chief of the kolchytes interrupted, "for the great festival of the valley, and for ten days no beast can have been killed here for food; besides, the stables and slaughter-houses are a long way from this, on the other side of the linen-factories."

"It is strange!" replied the priest. "Preserve this heart carefully, kolchytes: or, better still, let it be enclosed in a case. We will take it over to the chief prophet of Amon. It would seem that some miracle has happened."

"The heart belongs to the Necropolis," answered the chief kolchytes, "and it would therefore be more fitting if we took it to the chief priest of the temple of Seti, Ameni."

"You command here!" said the other. "Let us go."

In a few minutes the priest of Amon and the chief of the kolchytes were being carried towards the valley in their litters. A taricheut followed them, who sat on a seat between two asses, and carefully carried a casket of ivory, in which reposed the ram's heart.

The old paraschites watched the priests disappear behind the tamarisk bushes. He longed to run after them, and tell them everything.

His conscience quaked with self reproach, and if his sluggish intelligence did not enable him to take in

at a glance all the results that his deed might entail, he still could guess that he had sown a seed whence deceit of every kind must grow. He felt as if he had fallen altogether into sin and falsehood, and that the goddess of truth, whom he had all his life honestly served, had reproachfully turned her back on him. After what had happened never could he hope to be pronounced a "truth-speaker" by the judges of the dead. Lost, thrown away, was the aim and end of a long life, rich in self-denial and prayer! His soul shed tears of blood, a wild sighing sounded in his ears, which saddened his spirit, and when he went back to his work again, and wanted to remove the soles of the feet* from a body, his hand trembled so that he could not hold the knife.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE news of the end of the sacred ram of Amon, and of the death of the bull Apis of Memphis, had reached the House of Seti, and was received there with loud lamentation, in which all its inhabitants joined, from the chief haruspex down to the smallest boy in the school-courts.

The superior of the institution, Ameni, had been for three days in Thebes, and was expected to return to-day. His arrival was looked for with anxiety and excitement by many. The chief of the haruspices was eager for it that he might hand over the imprisoned

* One of the mummies of Prague which were dissected by Czermak, had the soles of the feet removed and laid on the breast. We learn from Chapter 125 of the Book of the Dead that this was done that the sacred floor of the hall of judgment might not be defiled when the dead were summoned before Osiris.

scholars to condign punishment, and complain to him of Pentaur and Bent-Anat; the initiated knew that important transactions must have been concluded on the farther side of the Nile; and the rebellious disciples knew that now stern justice would be dealt to them.

The insurrectionary troop were locked into an open court upon bread and water, and as the usual room of detention of the establishment was too small for them all, for two nights they had had to sleep in a loft on thin straw mats. The young spirits were excited to the highest pitch, but each expressed his feelings in quite a different manner.

Bent-Anat's brother, Rameses' son, Rameri, had experienced the same treatment as his fellows, whom yesterday he had led into every sort of mischief, with even more audacity than usual, but to-day he hung his head.

In a corner of the court sat Anana, Pentaur's favorite scholar, hiding his face in his hands which rested on his knees. Rameri went up to him, touched his shoulders and said:

"We have played the game, and now must bear the consequences for good and for evil. Are you not ashamed of yourself, old boy? Your eyes are wet, and the drops here on your hands have not fallen from the clouds. You who are seventeen, and in a few months will be a scribe and a grown man!"

Anana looked at the prince, dried his eyes quickly, and said:

"I was the ring-leader. Ameni will turn me out of the place, and I must return disgraced to my poor mother, who has no one in the world but me."

"Poor fellow!" said Rameri kindly. "It was striking at random! If only our attempt had done Pentaur any good!"

"We have done him harm, on the contrary," said Anana vehemently, "and have behaved like fools!"

Rameri nodded in full assent, looked thoughtful for a moment, and then said:

"Do you know, Anana, that you were not the ring-leader? The trick was planned in this crazy brain; I take the whole blame on my own shoulders. I am the son of Rameses, and Ameni will be less hard on me than on you."

"He will examine us all," replied Anana, "and I will be punished sooner than tell a lie."

Rameri colored.

"Have you ever known my tongue sin against the lovely daughter of Ra?" he exclaimed. "But look here! did I stir up Antef, Hapi, Sent and all the others or no? Who but I advised you to find out Pentaur? Did I threaten to beg my father to take me from the school of Seti or not? I was the instigator of the mischief, I pulled the wires, and if we are questioned let me speak first. Not one of you is to mention Anana's name; do you hear? not one of you, and if they flog us or deprive us of our food we all stick to this, that I was guilty of all the mischief."

"You are a brave fellow!" said the son of the chief priest of Amon, shaking his right hand, while Anana held his left.

The prince freed himself laughing from their grasp.

"Now the old man may come home," he exclaimed, "we are ready for him. But all the same I will ask

my father to send me to Chennu, as sure as my name is Rameri, if they do not recall Pentaur."

"He treated us like school-boys!" said the eldest of the young malefactors.

"And with reason," replied Rameri, "I respect him all the more for it. You all think I am a careless dog —but I have my own ideas, and I will speak the words of wisdom."

With these words he looked round on his companions with comical gravity, and continued—imitating Ameni's manner:

"Great men are distinguished from little men by this—they scorn and contemn all which flatters their vanity, or seems to them for the moment desirable, or even useful, if it is not compatible with the laws which they recognize, or conducive to some great end which they have set before them; even though that end may not be reached till after their death.

"I have learned this, partly from my father, but partly I have thought it out for myself; and now I ask you, could Pentaur as 'a great man' have dealt with us better?"

"You have put into words exactly what I myself have thought ever since yesterday," cried Anana. "We have behaved like babies, and instead of carrying our point we have brought ourselves and Pentaur into disgrace."

The rattle of an approaching chariot was now audible, and Rameri exclaimed, interrupting Anana:

"It is he. Courage, boys! I am the guilty one. He will not dare to have me thrashed—but he will stab me with looks!"

Ameni descended quickly from his chariot. The gate-keeper informed him that the chief of the kolchytes, and the inspector of victims from the temple of Amon, desired to speak with him.

"They must wait," said the Prophet shortly. "Show them meanwhile into the garden pavilion. Where is the chief haruspex?"

He had hardly spoken when the vigorous old man for whom he was enquiring hurried to meet him, to make him acquainted with all that had occurred in his absence. But the high-priest had already heard in Thebes all that his colleague was anxious to tell him.

When Ameni was absent from the House of Seti, he caused accurate information to be brought to him every morning of what had taken place there.

Now when the old man began his story he interrupted him.

"I know everything," he said. "The disciples cling to Pentaur, and have committed a folly for his sake, and you met the princess Bent-Anat with him in the temple of Hatasu, to which he had admitted a woman of low rank before she had been purified. These are grave matters, and must be seriously considered, but not to-day. Make yourself easy; Pentaur will not escape punishment; but for to-day we must recall him to this temple, for we have need of him to-morrow for the solemnity of the feast of the valley. No one shall meet him as an enemy till he is condemned; I desire this of you, and charge you to repeat it to the others."

The haruspex endeavored to represent to his superior what a scandal would arise from this un-

timely clemency; but Ameni did not allow him to talk, he demanded his ring back, called a young priest, delivered the precious signet into his charge, and desired him to get into his chariot that was waiting at the door, and carry to Pentaur the command, in his name, to return to the temple of Seti.

The haruspex submitted, though deeply vexed, and asked whether the guilty boys were also to go unpunished.

"No more than Pentaur," answered Ameni. "But can you call this school-boy's trick guilt? Leave the children to their fun, and their imprudence. The educator is the destroyer, if he always and only keeps his eyes open, and cannot close them at the right moment. Before life demands of us the exercise of serious duties we have a mighty over-abundance of vigor at our disposal; the child exhausts it in play, and the boy in building wonder-castles with the hammer and chisel of his fancy, in inventing follies. You shake your head, Septah! but I tell you, the audacious tricks of the boy are the fore-runners of the deeds of the man. I shall let one only of the boys suffer for what is past, and I should let him even go unpunished if I had not other pressing reasons for keeping him away from our festival."

The haruspex did not contradict his chief; for he knew that when Ameni's eyes flashed so suddenly, and his demeanor, usually so measured, was as restless as at present, something serious was brewing.

The high-priest understood what was passing in Septah's mind.

"You do not understand me now," said he. "But this evening, at the meeting of the initiated, you shall

know all. Great events are stirring. The brethren in the temple of Amon, on the other shore, have fallen off from what must always be the Holiest to us white-robed priests, and will stand in our way when the time for action is arrived. At the feast of the valley we shall stand in competition with the brethren from Thebes. All Thebes will be present at the solemn service, and it must be proved which knows how to serve the Divinity most worthily, they or we. We must avail ourselves of all our resources, and Pentaur we certainly cannot do without. He must fill the function of Cherheb* for to-morrow only; the day after he must be brought to judgment. Among the rebellious boys are our best singers, and particularly young Anana, who leads the voices of the choir-boys; I will examine the silly fellows at once. Rameri—Rameses' son—was among the young miscreants?"

"He seems to have been the ring-leader," answered Septah.

Ameni looked at the old man with a significant smile, and said:

"The royal family are covering themselves with honor! His eldest daughter must be kept far from the temple and the gathering of the pious, as being unclean and refractory, and we shall be obliged to expel his son too from our college. You look horrified, but I say to you that the time for action is come. More of this, this evening. Now, one question: Has the news of the death of the ram of Amon reached you? Yes? Rameses himself presented him to the God, and they gave it his name. A bad omen."

* Cherheb was the title of the speaker or reciter at a festival. We cannot agree with those who confuse this personage with the chief of the Kolchytes.

"And Apis too is dead!" The haruspex threw up his arms in lamentation.

"His Divine spirit has returned to God," replied Ameni. "Now we have much to do. Before all things we must prove ourselves equal to those in Thebes over there, and win the people over to our side. The panegyric prepared by us for to-morrow must offer some great novelty. The Regent Ani grants us a rich contribution, and—"

"And," interrupted Septah, "our thaumaturgists understand things very differently from those of the house of Amon, who feast while we practise."

Ameni nodded assent, and said with a smile: "Also we are more indispensable than they to the people. They show them the path of life, but we smooth the way of death. It is easier to find the way without a guide in the day-light than in the dark. We are more than a match for the priests of Amon."

"So long as you are our leader, certainly," cried the haruspex.

"And so long as the temple has no lack of men of your temper!" added Ameni, half to Septah, and half to the second prophet of the temple, sturdy old Gagabu, who had come into the room.

Both accompanied him into the garden, where the two priests were awaiting him with the miraculous heart.

Ameni greeted the priest from the temple of Amon with dignified friendliness, the head kolchytes with distant reserve, listened to their story, looked at the heart which lay in the box, with Septah and Gagabu, touched it delicately with the tips of his fingers, care-

fully examining the object, which diffused a strong perfume of spices; then he said earnestly:

"If this, in your opinion, kolchytes, is not a human heart, and if in yours, my brother of the temple of Amon, it is a ram's heart, and if it was found in the body of Rui, who is gone to Osiris, we here have a mystery which only the Gods can solve. Follow me into the great court. Let the gong be sounded, Gagabu, four times, for I wish to call all the brethren together."

The gong rang in loud waves of sound to the farthest limits of the group of buildings. The initiated, the fathers, the temple-servants, and the scholars streamed in, and in a few minutes were all collected. Not a man was wanting, for at the four strokes of the rarely-sounded alarum every dweller in the House of Seti was expected to appear in the court of the temple. Even the leech Nebsecht came; for he feared that the unusual summons announced the outbreak of a fire.

Ameni ordered the assembly to arrange itself in a procession, informed his astonished hearers that in the breast of the deceased prophet Rui, a ram's heart, instead of a man's, had been found, and desired them all to follow his instructions. Each one, he said, was to fall on his knees and pray, while he would carry the heart into the holiest of holies, and enquire of the Gods what this wonder might portend to the faithful.

Ameni, with the heart in his hand, placed himself at the head of the procession, and disappeared behind the veil of the sanctuary; the initiated prayed in the vestibule, in front of it; the priests and scholars in the vast court, which was closed on the west by the stately colonnade and the main gateway to the temple.

For fully an hour Ameni remained in the silent holy of holies, from which thick clouds of incense rolled out, and then he reappeared with a golden vase set with precious stones. His tall figure was now resplendent with rich ornaments, and a priest, who walked before him, held the vessel high above his head.

Ameni's eyes seemed spell-bound to the vase, and he followed it, supporting himself by his crozier, with humble inflections.

The initiated bowed their heads till they touched the pavement, and the priests and scholars bent their faces down to the earth, when they beheld their haughty master so filled with humility and devotion. The worshippers did not raise themselves till Ameni had reached the middle of the court and ascended the steps of the altar, on which the vase with the heart was now placed, and they listened to the slow and solemn accents of the high-priest which sounded clearly through the whole court.

"Fall down again and worship! wonder, pray, and adore! The noble inspector of sacrifices of the temple of Amon has not been deceived in his judgment; a ram's heart was in fact found in the pious breast of Rui. I heard distinctly the voice of the Divinity in the sanctuary, and strange indeed was the speech that met my ear. Wolves tore the sacred ram of Amon in his sanctuary on the other bank of the river, but the heart of the divine beast found its way into the bosom of the saintly Rui. A great miracle has been worked, and the Gods have shown a wonderful sign. The spirit of the Highest liked not to dwell in the body of this not perfectly holy ram, and seeking a purer abiding-place found it in the breast of our Rui; and now in this con-

secrated vase. In this the heart shall be preserved till a new ram offered by a worthy hand enters the herd of Amon. This heart shall be preserved with the most sacred relics, it has the property of healing many diseases, and the significant words seem favorable which stood written in the midst of the vapor of incense, and which I will repeat to you word for word, 'That which is high shall rise higher, and that which exalts itself, shall soon fall down.' Rise, pastophori! hasten to fetch the holy images, bring them out, place the sacred heart at the head of the procession, and let us march round the walls of the temple with hymns of praise. Ye temple-servants, seize your staves, and spread in every part of the city the news of the miracle which the Divinity has vouchsafed to us."

After the procession had marched round the temple and dispersed, the priest of Amon took leave of Ameni; he bowed deeply and formally before him, and with a coolness that was almost malicious said:

"We, in the temple of Amon, shall know how to appreciate what you heard in the holy of holies. The miracle has occurred, and the king shall learn how it came to pass, and in what words it was announced."

"In the words of the Most High," said the high-priest with dignity; he bowed to the other, and turned to a group of priests, who were discussing the great event of the day.

Ameni enquired of them as to the preparations for the festival of the morrow, and then desired the chief haruspex to call the refractory pupils together in the school-court. The old man informed him that Pentaur had returned, and he followed his superior to the

released prisoners, who, prepared for the worst, and expecting severe punishment, nevertheless shook with laughter when Rameri suggested that, if by chance they were condemned to kneel upon peas, they should get them cooked first.

"It will be long asparagus*—not peas," said another looking over his shoulder, and pretending to be flogging.

They all shouted again with laughter, but it was hushed as soon as they heard Ameni's well-known footstep.

Each feared the worst, and when the high-priest stood before them even Rameri's mirth was quite quelled, for though Ameni looked neither angry nor threatening, his appearance commanded respect, and each one recognized in him a judge against whose verdict no remonstrance was to be thought of.

To their infinite astonishment Ameni spoke kindly to the thoughtless boys, praised the motive of their action—their attachment to a highly-endowed teacher—but then clearly and deliberately laid before them the folly of the means they had employed to attain their end, and at what a cost. "Only think," he continued, turning to the prince, "if your father sent a general, who he thought would be better in a different place, from Syria to Kusch, and his troops therefore all went over to the enemy! How would you like that?"

So for some minutes he continued to blame and warn them, and he ended his speech by promising, in consideration of the great miracle that gave that day a special sanctity, to exercise unwonted clemency. For the sake of example, he said, he could not let them

* Asparagus was known to the Egyptians. Pliny says they held in their mouths, as a remedy for toothache, wine in which asparagus had been cooked.

pass altogether unpunished, and he now asked them which of them had been the instigator of the deed; he and he only should suffer punishment.

He had hardly done speaking, when prince Rameri stepped forward, and said modestly:

"We acknowledge, holy father, that we have played a foolish trick; and I lament it doubly because I devised it, and made the others follow me. I love Pentaur, and next to thee there is no one like him in the sanctuary."

Ameni's countenance grew dark, and he answered with displeasure:

"No judgment is allowed to pupils as to their teachers—nor to you, If you were not the son of the king, who rules Egypt as Ra, I would punish your temerity with stripes. My hands are tied with regard to you, and yet they must be everywhere and always at work if the hundreds committed to my care are to be kept from harm."

"Nay, punish me!" cried Rameri. "If I commit a folly I am ready to bear the consequences."

Ameni looked pleased at the vehement boy, and would willingly have shaken him by the hand and stroked his curly head, but the penance he proposed for Rameri was to serve a great end, and Ameni would not allow any overflow of emotion to hinder him in the execution of a well considered design. So he answered the prince with grave determination:

"I must and will punish you—and I do so by requesting you to leave the House of Seti this very day."

The prince turned pale. But Ameni went on more kindly:

"I do not expel you with ignominy from among us —I only bid you a friendly farewell. In a few weeks you would in any case have left the college, and by the king's command have transferred your blooming life, health, and strength to the exercising ground of the chariot-brigade. No punishment for you but this lies in my power. Now give me your hand; you will make a fine man, and perhaps a great warrior."

The prince stood in astonishment before Ameni, and did not take his offered hand. Then the priest went up to him, and said:

"You said you were ready to take the consequences of your folly, and a prince's word must be kept. Before sunset we will conduct you to the gate of the temple."

Ameni turned his back on the boys, and left the school-court.

Rameri looked after him. Utter whiteness had overspread his blooming face, and the blood had left even his lips. None of his companions approached him, for each felt that what was passing in his soul at this moment would brook no careless intrusion. No one spoke a word; they all looked at him.

He soon observed this, and tried to collect himself, and then he said in a low tone while he held out his hands to Anana and another friend:

"Am I then so bad that I must be driven out from among you all like this—that such a blow must be inflicted on my father?"

"You refused Ameni your hand!" answered Anana. "Go to him, offer him your hand, beg him to be less severe, and perhaps he will let you remain."

Rameri answered only "No." But that "No" was so

decided that all who knew him understood that it was final.

Before the sun set he had left the school. Ameni gave him his blessing; he told him that if he himself ever had to command he would understand his severity, and allowed the other scholars to accompany him as far as the Nile. Pentaur parted from him tenderly at the gate.

When Rameri was alone in the cabin of his gilt bark with his tutor, he felt his eyes swimming in tears.

"Your highness is surely not weeping?" asked the official.

"Why?" asked the prince sharply.

"I thought I saw tears on your highness' cheeks."

"Tears of joy that I am out of the trap," cried Rameri; he sprang on shore, and in a few minutes he was with his sister in the palace.

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